

Main Idea: At the beginning of John’s gospel, we learn that Jesus did two quiet miracles in Galilee to begin His ministry. As we ponder His second miracle, as recorded in John 4:43-54, we learn three things about Jesus.

- I. We see Jesus’ humanity (43-45).
    - A. He went home to Galilee (43-44).
      1. These were the people who knew Him best.
      2. In reality, they didn’t know Him at all.
    - B. He went home to a hero’s welcome, sort of (45).
  - II. We see Jesus’ divine authority (46-53).
    - A. We see it in what He told the people (48).
      1. For the natural man, seeing is believing.
      2. He will not believe in Jesus unless the Spirit opens his eyes.
    - B. We see it in the way He treated the ruler (49-50).
      1. He showed him who the real ruler is.
      2. He showed him mercy.
      3. He showed him how to exhibit genuine faith.
    - C. We see it in the way He healed the ruler’s child (51-53).
      1. He healed the boy from twenty miles away.
      2. He healed the boy in a way that no one saw it happen.
      3. He healed the boy in order to reach an entire household.
  - III. We see Jesus’ intent (54).
    - A. Jesus didn’t come to earth to give us what we want.
    - B. Jesus came to earth to give us what we need.
- Take Inventory: How are you responding to Jesus?
1. The proper response is to trust Him fully.
  2. If you trust Him, you will take Him at His Word and do what He says.
  3. What is He telling you to do today?

I have news to share with you, good news. If you want to experience life that’s really life, the kind of life that our Maker intended, life that is fulfilling and eternal, you can. You can no matter who you are or how embarrassing your past may be. God extends the offer of everlasting life to you. Yet to experience it, you must believe that the person named Jesus who lived on this planet two thousand years ago is none other than the Son of God and that He alone is God’s Chosen One.

Where did I obtain this news that I am now proclaiming? I got it from an eyewitness, from a man who spent three years up close with Jesus. He wrote a God-inspired book about Jesus and concluded at the end that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31).

That kind of claim can get you killed. It nearly did John. He lived in a world not so different from ours, a world filled with religious options and a world that hates exclusive claims. “You must believe that Jesus is the Christ and the only way to God,” he told his world for over fifty years. And his world branded him a criminal, boiled him in a cauldron of oil, and eventually banished him to a deserted isle.

Tell the world you have another way to God and they’ll applaud you. Tell the world you’ve found the *only* way to God and they’ll call you a lunatic, or worse.

Let’s face the fact that what we call good news is offensive to our world. It also raises questions, valid questions. It’s true. John’s good news raises two critical questions that are vital if you are here today and do not yet possess eternal life. They’re also vital if you have it and are burdened to minister to your family members and friends and the world of people around you who are perishing. Question one, what is it about Jesus that warrants the astounding assertion that He indeed is the Son of God and therefore the

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exclusive option for reaching God? And question two, what does it mean to *believe* in Him?

It's easy to miss the forest for the trees when you're reading God's Word. Here's the forest. John devoted twenty-one chapters to answering those two questions. Who is Jesus, and what does it look like when a person truly believes in Him? Now let's look again at the trees in the forest as we continue our journey through John's gospel and find further insight into the answers to our two questions.

This morning we come to the end of John 4. This passage shows us in a powerful way who Jesus is and what a God-pleasing faith response looks like.

John introduced us to Jesus back in chapter one as the Logos. He's the Creator of the world who took on human flesh. In the chapters that follow John shows us what the God-man did to launch His public ministry.

He surely didn't do it the way so many upstart ministries do it in our day. We're into the spectacular these days. Mass mailing, web campaigns, attention grabbing marketing schemes. Make yourself noticed. That's how you launch a new ministry, right?

Not Jesus. When you read the first four chapters of John's account you discover that the Almighty Son of God launched His public ministry by deliberately doing things in a *non-spectacular way*. Specifically, the account shows us that Jesus did two quiet miracles in Galilee, and what He did, and the way He did it says so much to us about who He is and why you should entrust your life to Him.

We're going to ponder His second miracle this morning. It's recorded in John 4:43-54. I've entitled this message, "*Another Quiet Miracle*," for reasons we'll discuss shortly. As we walk through the forest today, we're going to learn three things about Jesus.

#### I. We see Jesus' humanity (43-45).

Notice verse 43, "After the two days he left for Galilee." When you trace Jesus' footsteps in the first four chapters of John's gospel, you see the Savior on the move. He was baptized in Judea in chapter one (that's down south), then turning water into wine in Galilee in chapter two (that's up north). Then He's talking with Nicodemus in Jerusalem in chapter three (that's Judea again). Now He's back in Galilee at the end of chapter four.

Don't miss that important detail.

**A. He went home to Galilee (43-44).** I lived in Galilee for four months in 1980, on Kibbutz Ma' Agan. I can still remember how I felt when I rode in that vehicle from Tel Aviv to the southern shores of the Sea of Galilee. It's a beautiful place. For me, Galilee was a place to study. For Jesus it was going *home*.

Jesus was raised in Nazareth, fifteen miles west of the Sea of Galilee. He went to the synagogue there, learned to read there, developed His skill as a carpenter there. He played with friends there as a boy, worked in His step-father's shop as a teen, no doubt. So He's come home.

What did He think about this trip home? We find out in verse 44. Notice the parenthetical note, "(Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)"

That's strange. John wants us to know that prior to this trip, Jesus had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. Yet having said that Jesus went ahead and went to his own country. Again, that's what Galilee was for Jesus, the region where He grew up and lived His early adult life.

So why would He go there if He knew the response was going to be negative? Some Bible students say that "his own country" refers to Judea (since He was born in

Bethlehem). They say that the point of the verse is to show that He left Judea because He faced unbelief there (see 2:23-24). He had no honor there, so He went to Galilee.

I don't think so. When you read the parallel texts of Matthew 13:54-57, Mark 6:1-4, and Luke 4:16-24, you find this same proverb quoted ("Only in his hometown is a prophet without honor"), and in the context of those passages "hometown" clearly refers to Nazareth in Galilee.

So why did Jesus go home to Galilee if He knew the response there would be deficient? Hendriksen offers what I think is the right perspective. He says the Jesus left Judea and went to Galilee precisely because He knew He would *not* receive honor in Galilee. Huh? Why go there if He's going to be slighted? The answer is, He is avoiding a premature crisis with the Pharisees.

Let's go back and look at the immediate context in John 4:1-3. John tells us, "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee."

Don't miss that. Why did Jesus leave Judea? Because His popularity was growing there, and so was the rising hostility of the jealous Pharisees. He's not afraid of them, but He knows it's not time yet to set in motion the course of events that will take Him to the cross. So what does He do? He leaves Judea and heads north towards "His own country" of Galilee. En route, He makes a two day stop in Samaria where He gives living water to a woman and her village. After that two day ministry ends, He proceeds further north to His homeland.

Know this about Galilee.

1. *These were the people who knew Him best.* I grew up just outside a town of 1,500 people, and one of the things about small towns is that people know you. You're not a number. You're a known quantity.

When the Son of God came to earth, He chose a small town to call home. Interesting, isn't it? He became incarnate in a way that let people see Him and know Him.

One of the attacks against Christ over the centuries was to say, "He didn't really become a man. God would never do that." But He did. They knew Him in Galilee. He indeed became a man and there were thousands of people in Galilee who could attest to that fact. They ate meals with Him. They went fishing with Him. They bought furniture from Him. They knew Him. And yet...

2. *In reality, they didn't know Him at all.* John made that point at the beginning of his biography. Remember John 1:11? "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him."

So what happened when He went to Galilee? Verse 45 tells us...

**B. He went home to a hero's welcome, sort of (45).** "When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, for they also had been there."

So the Galileans welcomed Him. He was a hometown hero who made them proud by the miracles He just did down in Jerusalem at Passover (see 2:23). But it was a fickle welcome, as we'll soon see. Think of it this way. Sure, they gave Him a welcome, but honor? No way (see verse 48). They'll be grumbling about Him shortly (in 6:41), and then leaving Him in great numbers (in 6:66).

So who is this person in whom you must place your faith if you want to have eternal life? He is the Son of God who came into the world and became a red-blooded, one hundred percent, Jewish born, Galilean raised *man* named Jesus.

But of course, there's more to the story. A man? Yes, but not just a man. That brings us to scene two.

## II. We see Jesus' divine authority (46-53).

Jesus' public ministry lasted about three years. He's actually launching the Galilean phase right here and it lasted for about sixteen months (December AD 27 to April AD 29). If you want to know what happened during this Galilean phase, you'll need to read Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts (Matt. 4:12-15:20; Mark 1:14-7:23; Luke 4:14-9:17), for the focus in the Gospel of John is on what Jesus did in Judea, not Galilee. Nevertheless John does give us some information about a couple of significant miracles that Jesus performed in Galilee. I call them *quiet* miracles because Jesus performed them out of the limelight and without fanfare. Both took place when Jesus was in Cana.<sup>1</sup>

Notice verse 46, "Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine." That was miracle number one. We saw it back in chapter 2 and heard John conclude in verse 11, "This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him."

Now He's back in Cana, and He's about to perform miracle #2. That's what John tells us in 4:54, "This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee." Actually this isn't Jesus' second miracle, for we're told in 2:23 that He did miraculous signs (plural) in Jerusalem. But this is His second miracle in Galilee. And John includes them both because they shed much light for us on the true divine identity of the Christ.

Again, that's John's purpose in this gospel. He tells us in John 20:30-31, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

So when you read something in John's gospel, you can be sure it contributes to that end. That's why we find these two miracles at the beginning of John's account. Jesus did two miracles in Galilee that demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that He indeed is the Christ and worthy of the trust of your heart and life.

We're given the setting for the miracle in verses 46-47. "And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death."

John calls him a *basilikos*, literally "a king's man." The term probably indicates he was an official in the court of King Herod the tetrarch or Herod Antipas (who ruled over Galilee from 4 BC to 39 AD). He lives in Capernaum but made the seventeen mile trip to Cana this day because he heard Jesus was there.

He's not interested in salvation. That's not why he's come. He has another agenda on his mind. He's desperate, for his son is deathly sick and barely alive. He begs Jesus to come to Capernaum and heal his son. The verb tense indicates he kept begging over and over.

Do you see the irony here? Here's a man with political connections and power and probably money who's traveled half a day to meet an obscure village carpenter.

I feel for this man. Men are wired to fix problems, but look at him. He's an important man, but he is powerless to fix the problem closest to his heart. Sure, he had connections, money in the bank, a comfortable lifestyle, yet none of that brought peace to his soul on this day. His son is at death's door, and he is at whit's end so much so that he is willing to try anything for help.

And so he tried Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Cana is where Nathanael lived (21:2).

I've met a lot of people like this father. When life is good, they don't need anything. They're in control, or so they think. They've got life by the tail, again, or so they think. Then the doctor tells them their loved one has cancer, or the pink slip comes, or the divorce papers, and all of a sudden they can't shake the truth they've been ignoring all their lives. They are not in control and never have been, for in reality they were created to live in dependence upon the One who gave them life, their connections, their power, their money, and everything else to their name.

But the story isn't about this man. It's about Jesus. Jesus is about to put His divine authority on display, and He does it in three ways.

**A. We see it in what He told the people (48).** “‘Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,’ Jesus told him, ‘you will never believe.’”

That's interesting. The verse says that Jesus told *him* these words, but the verb is plural. He's obviously speaking to the townspeople people of Cana. Again, He did His first miracle in Cana says 2:11, but instead of believing in Him the people who benefitted from that first miracle just want more miracles. And even more so after the miracles He just performed in Jerusalem.

The people are flocking to Jesus like He's a “religious sideshow” (to borrow a phrase from Kent Hughes). “Hurry, hurry, don't miss the latest miracle! Get your popcorn here. Crowd in close, folks, so you don't miss a thing!”<sup>2</sup>

To which Jesus said, “Unless you people see the miracles, you'll never believe.”

Things haven't changed much, have they? That's the way it is for many in contemporary Christianity. They go to church to see a show, and when the show is good they leave pumped up ready to live for Jesus another week. That's because...

1. *For the natural man, seeing is believing.* “Unless you *see*, you'll never *believe*.”

Do Jesus' words seem harsh? In reality there's nothing more loving He could tell the people of Cana. Or us.

My friend, what we need isn't a show. What we desperately need is to get to know the real Jesus. That's the point of church. Not to put on a show, but to teach people the truth about the person and work of the Christ so they'll believe in Him and know how to live for Him.

Sure they wanted to see Jesus' miracles. Who wouldn't? And He certainly did them. Again and again He did them, as you discover when you journey through John's gospel.

John 2:23-24 “Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the **miraculous signs** he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.”

John 3:2 “He [Nicodemus] came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the **miraculous signs** you are doing if God were not with him.’”

John 6:2 “A great crowd of people followed him because they saw the **miraculous signs** he had performed on the sick.”

John 6:14-15 “After the people saw the **miraculous sign** that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.”

John 6:30 “So they asked him, ‘What **miraculous sign** then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?’”

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<sup>2</sup> Kent Hughes, pp. 139-40.

John 12:37 “Even after Jesus had done all these **miraculous signs** in their presence, they still would not believe in him.”

Don’t miss that. Do a miracle for a sinner and what happens? Does he believe with saving faith? No. He just wants more miracles. In fact...

2. *He will not believe in Jesus unless the Spirit opens his eyes.* That’s what the Lord told Nicodemus, didn’t He? “No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit...The Spirit gives birth to spirit...You must be born again (John 3:5-7).” Jesus will have much more to say about the necessity of the Spirit’s work, as we’ll see later in John (see 14:16-17; 16:8-11, 13-14).

Don’t miss Jesus’ divine authority here, my friend. *Unless you see the miracles, you will never believe,* He tells the crowd in Cana. What gives Him the right to tell people when they will believe and when they won’t? It’s because He knows them inside out, and how does He know? A man wouldn’t know that, would he? No, but God would.

By the way, how do you help a dad whose child is dying? He needs sympathy, doesn’t he? He needs a listening ear, but he’s certainly in no place to receive instruction about the sinful condition of his soul, is he? But that’s what Jesus gave him.

In C. S. Lewis’s biography, *Surprised By Joy*, he relates how the Lord worked to bring him into His kingdom, and how he struggled and fought and looked for a way of escape. Then he reflects, “The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and his compulsion is our liberation.”<sup>3</sup>

That brings us to the second way that Jesus displayed His divine authority.

**B. We see it in the way He treated the ruler (49-50).** Notice verse 49, “The royal official said, ‘Sir.’” Literally, *kurie*, Lord. See the contrast. He’s a royal official, the king’s man. But he submits himself to this Galilean carpenter and calls him, *kurie*.

And proceeds to say, “Come down before my child dies.” He’s not giving up, is he? He has nowhere else to turn, so he keeps coming to Jesus.

And what a request! *Come down.* He says “down” because Cana was on high ground and Capernaum was seven hundred feet below sea level on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. But just think of the implications. He wants Jesus to drop everything He’s doing and make a seventeen mile trip with him to come down to his house, and he wants Him to do it immediately. What a bold petition!

But Jesus doesn’t move. It’s not because He doesn’t care. It’s because He doesn’t need to. Verse 50, “Jesus replied, ‘You may go. Your son will live.’”

What a response! Five words in the Greek. *You may go.* It’s actually a present tense command, “Be going.” *Your son will live.* Actually, it’s not future tense verb, but another present tense verb. *Your son lives!* With those words Jesus revealed three things to this man.

1. *He showed him who the real ruler is.* You want Me to go with you. That’s not necessary. I want you to go. I am telling you to go because I have a better plan than yours.

2. *He showed him mercy.* He just told the man and the rest in the crowd, “Unless you see miracles, you will never believe.” But what did He do? Another miracle! But He didn’t let them *see* it this time, did He? Oh the mercy of our Savior! How many times does He patiently give us what we ask of Him, though we’ve slighted Him and thought wrongly of Him and tried to use Him like a Genie in a bottle!

3. *He showed him how to exhibit genuine faith.* Do you believe Me, Mr. King’s man? Do you really believe I can do what you’re asking? Then here’s how you’ll show it. *Go.*

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<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, quote taken from Kent Hughes, p. 139.

I love the man's response. Verse 50 states, "The man took Jesus at his word and departed." Something's happened inside this man. This father had no proof that his request was granted, no sign to verify his son was healed. All he had was a word from Jesus. And yet that was enough for him. Explain that. Here's the biblical explanation. "Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17)." The Spirit of Christ took the word of Christ and produced faith in the person of Christ.

Which brings us to the third demonstration of Christ's divine authority.

**C. We see it in the way He healed the ruler's child (51-53).** Notice verses 51-53, "While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, 'The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.' Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he and all his household believed."

Think for a moment how Jesus healed that young boy.

1. *He healed the boy from nearly twenty miles away.* Contrast that to the actions of so-called faith healers in our day. When the healing doesn't come, they blame the faulty outcome on what? The lack of faith of the sick person, right? But this miracle isn't dependent on the sick person's faith, but solely on the faith of the Healer. Jesus healed that boy before the dad even left His side. *You may go*—the dad is still there when Jesus announces, *Your son lives*. Distance healing. How powerful is that?!

2. *He healed the boy in a way that no one saw it happen.* "Unless you see miraculous signs, you'll never believe," He told them. And He didn't let them see anything, did He? He healed this boy in a manner such that no one saw it happen.

Think about the mother and whoever else was in the house that day. All of a sudden, this dying boy is perfectly healthy. Astounding!

By the way, isn't this how Jesus heals today? He doesn't touch His physical hand on the infirmed. He just hears the plea of the burdened parent, speaks a word, and it's done.

Notice that the man didn't even make it home before he ran into his servants. "He's alive!" they announced. "When did it happen?" he asks. "The fever left yesterday at the seventh hour," they answer. The very time Jesus had told him, "Your son lives."

Ponder that for a moment. The seventh hour. By Jewish time, that's 1:00 in the afternoon. The commentators say he could have easily made the trip home in seven hours (one commentator said four hours since he was surely traveling by horse). But the text says he didn't run into his servants until the next day. Explain that.

If you'd just made a desperate trip to find a cure for your child whom you left at home on his deathbed, and you received word that your child was totally healed, wouldn't you head for home as fast as you could? I would...unless there was a more compelling reason to delay my trip.

The text doesn't say, but I wonder if the man didn't leave for home right away. Perhaps he stayed in Cana a little longer. And why would he do that? What could be more important than seeing his healed son? Only one thing. Spending a few more moments with the One who healed him.

You see, it's not just a little boy's health Jesus is after here.

3. *He healed the boy in order to reach an entire household.* Verse 53 concludes, "So he and all his household believed." What's the proper response to the miracles of Jesus? These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

The man and his family *believed*. Believed what? Not simply that Jesus could heal a sick boy. That's done. This man and the rest of his household believed *in Jesus*.

We've seen His humanity, and we've seen His divine authority. One more thing...

### III. We see Jesus' intent (54).

John concludes the account in verse 54, "This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee."

The fact is, you'll find eight major signs in John's gospel that prove that Jesus is the Christ. This is number two. And why are they there?

Why did Jesus go to Galilee? And why did He heal this boy in Cana? For the same reason He did everything else He did as recorded in John's gospel. Including go to Jerusalem when He full well knew the leaders were after Him. Including letting wicked men nail Him to a cross when He certainly had power to overthrow them. And including walking out of a death tomb alive. Why did He do all those things? Here's why...

*These are written that you may believe and have life through His name.*

My friend, know this.

**A. Jesus didn't come to earth to give us what we want.** Nothing wrong with wanting healthy kids, and when they're sick we ought to come to Him for help. As with every other problem we face. But He came for a much greater reason.

**B. Jesus came to earth to give us what we need.** And that's *Himself*. Sinners need a Savior. Sinners need Jesus.

### Take Inventory: How are you responding to Jesus?

1. *The proper response is to trust Him fully.* What a beautiful picture of this we see in John 4. He took Jesus at His word. That's the nature of saving faith. It's personal, meaning it's in the person of Jesus Himself. It's produced by the word of Jesus. There now is no voice you treasure more in this life, even above the voice of the child you so love back home. The proper response to Jesus is nothing less than putting your trust fully in Him.

Have you done so? Some of you are dead in your sins. Can a dead man live again? Yes! Believe in the Christ and you will have life in His name! And that's just the beginning! For...

2. *If you trust Him, you will take Him at His Word and do what He says.* When He says to go home without Him, you'll go. When He says to tell your family about Him, you'll tell them and urge them to believe too. The man took Jesus at His word and departed.

3. *What is He telling you to do today?* To some He's saying, "You say you believe in Me. I want you to make your profession public through baptism." Will you take Him at His word? To others He's saying, "I don't want you to play church. I want you to join a local church and make it a priority in your life." Will you take Jesus at His word? Perhaps He's saying, "I've given you gifts. I want you to use those gifts so others will learn about Me." Will you take Him at His word? Maybe He's saying, "I want you to turn off the television and spend time with Me in my Word every morning before you launch your day." Or, "I want you to go make things right with that brother you're avoiding." Or, "I want you to invite your neighbor over for lunch this week so you can tell Him about Me." It boils down to this. If our faith is real, then we'll take Jesus at His word and move into action.