

“The Healing of the Officials Son”

John 4:39-54

Perhaps you feel too far away from God for him to love you.

Distance is no problem for the Saviour of the world. His was the longest of all journeys. He left heaven and came to earth to die for you.

There is no distance too great that his love cannot find you.

Those of you who around my age will remember the 1965 song by Ray Brown and The Whispers; “Twenty Miles”.

The chorus reads: “Twenty Miles is a long long way but I’ve got to see my baby every day”.

Today we want to talk about a Father who walked twenty miles to get to Jesus so that Jesus could heal his dying son.

Who among us wouldn’t walk twenty miles if we knew at the end of our journey we would find a cure for a terminal illness.

As with everything in John’s gospel there is a deeper meaning of course.

Perhaps part of that meaning has to do with the journey God took to save his dying sons and daughters.

Our God went to extraordinary lengths to save us. Would you not agree?

So John sets the scene. We are back in the village of Cana once more.

Remember John’s first recorded sign the turning of water into wine.

Altogether there are seven miracle signs in John’s gospel account.

Now Jesus will heal a dying lad, from a distance. Perhaps You might consider as I continue what that might mean at a deeper level for you.

As we continue our journey through John's gospel we will see that each of the seven miraculous signs gets a little more impressive, until we reach the seventh sign – the raising of Lazarus.

All of these seven signs point to Jesus death and resurrection.

John narrates Jesus actions in each sign then he turns the camera – as it were – on those who witness each sign.

Notice:

When the water was turned to wine and when Jesus drove out the money changers the disciples and the servants saw and believed.

But the Jewish leaders asked for further signs to prove Jesus credentials.

In the end no matter how many signs Jesus gives they will not believe because they wanted the praise of men not God.

Even Nicodemus comes by night, in secret, despite believing that Jesus had been sent from God.

It seems He too was afraid of popular opinion.

Then there's the Samaritan woman and the inhabitants of the village of Sychar. Theirs is a different story

They believe without seeing a sign. This race hated by God's chosen people the Jews, believe on the basis of Jesus testimony.

John writes in verse 42 of chapter 4:

"Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world."

One is reminded of Jesus words to Thomas,

"You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." (John 20:29)

These despised Samaritans need no sign.

Of course the disciples are stunned by this turn of events.

They still don't understand what the Samaritans had come to grasp; That Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world.

The harvest is there staring them in the face in the persons of those Samaritan converts.

God wants all people to be saved and he invites us up into his vision and mission to save every soul for whom Jesus died.

And so we come to John's second miraculous sign done in Cana. The healing of the government official's son. From a distance.

Notice what John says about the Galileans.

They received Jesus because they had been in Jerusalem and had seen signs. Jesus frustration boils over when the Official asks him to come and heal his son.

That is something worth meditating on. Why does he want Jesus to come and heal his son? After all if he is the Messiah, distance will be no object to him.

Maybe the man's view of Jesus was nothing more than a performer of tricks like some South American Voodoo faith healer.

And so Jesus responds, "Will you only believe in me when you see signs and wonders?"

Notice how John unpacks the difference between the Jews in Jerusalem and the Jews in Galilee and the Samaritans in Samaria.

The Jews were not seeking Jesus as their Saviour. They were after a worker of wonders who could entertain them with a few magic tricks.

Even when his miracles were breath-taking they would still not believe in him as the Messiah.

Today in our rather pragmatic society people are looking for a God who works for them; a God who is user friendly.

One theologian wrote;

"We have turned to a God that we can use rather than a God we need to obey. We have turned to a God who will fulfil our whims rather than to a God to whom we should surrender our rights, our wills and desires."

Perhaps it would be sobering to consider in which camp we sit. Samaritans or Jews.

Now we know that he is the Saviour of the whole world.

Are we seeking a sign or a saviour?

Do we follow Jesus for what he can do for us; or as the Son of the Living God who is to be served and loved and revered?

The good news for you and me is that despite the man's mixed reasons for approaching Jesus, Jesus nevertheless heals his son.

Thank goodness that is how it is when we come to him with all our mixed motives. He still receives us. Just as I am!

Of course the wonder of it is that he loves me too much to leave me that way.

Twenty miles is a long way for us mere mortals, but for Jesus it is nothing at all.

No distance is too great that it can separate us from God's love.

Listen to what St Paul wrote in his letter to the Roman Christians who may have never been to the Holy Land let alone seen Jesus in person.

"38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8.

So my brothers and sisters. Perhaps you feel too far away from God for him to love you.

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