Go, Your Son Will Live

John 4:43-54

Key Verse: 4:50 “‘Go,’ Jesus replied, ‘your son will live.’ The man took Jesus at his word and departed.”

Last week we learned how Jesus helped his disciples to be ready for God’s harvest. Jesus said to them, “*Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest*.” (35) Jesus opened the eyes of his disciples to see the townspeople as ripe for harvest. Jesus teachesus the same thingas he did his disciples. Are you prepared to harvest as harvest workers? Did you have a chance to visit campus to pray and share the gospel? Or did you say, “The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” Knowing is one thing and practicing is quite another. Knowledge without action is unproductive. James 2:26 says, “*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*”I repent of my lack of action as a reaper. I didn’t work as hard as I should last week. I pray that I may go out to campus for sowing and reaping with the heart of Jesus.

In today’s passage a royal official in Cana in Galilee teaches us what believing in Jesus’ word really means and how we can believe in his word. May God fill us with his Spirit so that we may have a deep understanding of his word and obey it.

First, Faith in Jesus’ words vs. faith in signs and wonders (43-45, 48)On the way to Galilee from Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples had a two-day Bible conference in Sychar, a town of Samaria. The testimony of the Samaritan woman brought her townspeople to Jesus, who stayed two more days to teach his words to them. Jesus must have taught them the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, who had been faithful to his people by sending the Messiah through their descendants. Jesus must have taught them that God is gracious and compassionate, that he would forgive all sins of those who repent and ask forgiveness of sin whether they are Jew or the gentiles. Jesus must have taught them that he is the one who came to teach the kingdom of God and through him all people could be saved. After the Bible conference, the townspeople said to the woman, “*We no longer believejust because of what you have said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.*” (42) I pray that people who attend the UBF International Summer Bible Conference may confess as the townspeople said, “Now we believe that Jesus really is the Savior of the world.” Amen!

Finally Jesus arrived in Galilee. He already knew that the response of the Galileans would not be the same as the one of the Samaritans. He himself had pointed out that a prophet had no honor in his own country. (44) In fact, a prophet had no honor in his own country or town because he was regarded as a son of fellow townspeople, not as a man sent from God. This was reason why Jesus was not welcomed as the Son of God, but as a son of Joseph in the town of Nazareth. When Jesus arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They welcomed him not because they were happy to hear his words, but because they wanted to see more miracles. They had seen all that Jesus had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. (45) They expected Jesus to perform more miracles in their town than in Jerusalem. Jesus said in verse 48. “***Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe***.” According to Jesus’ words, the Galileans didn’t believe in Jesus unless they saw signs and wonders. What’s wrong with faith which comes from signs and wonders? In the Old Testaments God had performed many signs and wonders for the Israelites. God sent 10 plagues to the Egyptians in order to deliver the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea as on dry land. God provided manna and quail for them for 40 years in the wilderness. The Israelites had been familiar with signs and wonders which God had performed. Then, why did Jesus rebuke the Galileans who were seeking for miraculous signs and wonders? This was because they did not depend on God, but depended on signs and wonders. God performed miracles for them so that they might believe in God and depend on him. The purpose of signs and wonders is to help them believe in God and depend on him, not on signs and wonders. Jesus performed many miraculous signs in Galilee. He changed water into wine in Cana. By changing water into wine, his disciples believed in him. (2:11) Those who had watched Jesus performing miracles said many wows at that time. But that was it. They didn’t believe in Jesus.

We expect God’s miracles in our lives. A miracle is God’s power and love which is given and performed for those who are in an impossible situation. Through this unnatural phenomenon God wants us to trust in him and depend on him. But if we only expect miracles and enjoy them, we are not much different from the miracle-seeking Galileans. Whether God performs miracles in us or not, we must trust in God and believe in him. Whether God answers our prayer in our time or not, we must trust in him and wait. The Samaritans believed in Jesus when they heard his words. Jesus didn’t perform signs and wonders in Samaria, still the Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman’s testimony and his word. Some people wander here and there seeking spiritual gifts. They want to experience something electrifying for their body and soul. If not, they despair and complain. But we must learn from the Samaritans. Our faith should be based on the word of Christ, not based on signs and wonders. Paul the Apostle said in Roman 10:17, *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”* Our weekly one-on-one Bible study and testimony writing help us to grow in the knowledge of God and to lead us into the deep love of Christ through repentance and forgiveness of our sins. The word of God teaches us the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and through the forgiveness of sin. Our faith should be based on the Gospel.

Second, go, your son will live. (46-54).In Galilee there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. This official must have worked for King Herod, probably being in charge of royal tasks in the Galilean district. His son was sick. According to his words in verse 47 his son was dying and close to death. He was in desperate need of Jesus’ help. He must have invited many doctors and magicians to heal his son, but his son’s condition got worse. He ran from Capernaum to Cana around 24 miles to invite Jesus. He begged Jesus to come to see his son. “***Sir, come down before my child dies***.” (49)

What was Jesus’ response to his urgent request? Jesus said in verse 48. ***“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe.”*** The official and people expected Jesus’ quick and sympathetic response like this, “Oh, it must have been difficult for you and your son! Don’t be afraid, I will be there soon and heal him right away.” But Jesus’ response was not even close to this. His response sounded like not only rejection, but also rebuke. How did the official respond to Jesus’ word? In verse 49 the royal official said, “*Sir, come down before my child dies*.” He didn’t become angry with Jesus’ words. He didn’t even withdraw or give up. He begged Jesus for the Messiah’s mercy. He humbled himself for God’s favor on his dying son. This is the only thing he could do.

In order to gain God’s favor and mercy our attitude should be the same as the one of this official. Proverbs 3:34 says, “*God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble.”* (1 Pe 5:5) God shows his favor to those who humble themselves and seek him whole-heartedly. In the Old Testament Naaman the general of Aram became a leper. For healing from the leprosy Naaman traveled to Judea to meet the Prophet Elisha. But Elisha did not come out to welcome him, but from inside of the house he ordered Naaman to go and wash his body in the Jordan River seven times. The pride of general Naaman was hurt, and he became very angry with Elisha. He wanted to go back home, but he humbled himself, curbed his pride, and went to the water of the Jordan. When he washed his body in the water of the Jordan River seven times, his body was cured. (2 Ki 5:14) He was free from the leprosy. In this way God showed his favor to those who humbled themselves and obeyed his words. The royal official probably remembered the story of Naaman. He did not give up. He did not insist on his pride as a royal official. Humanly speaking he was a royal official and Jesus was a carpenter or a young evangelist. But he begged for Jesus’ mercy on his dying son. He really was a good father and a humble official.

What did Jesus say to him? Look at verse 50. “***Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live,” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.”*** Jesus didn’t say, “I will go with you”, but, “Go.” Jesus just said the word of promise that his son would live. Surprisingly the official took Jesus at his word and left. Taking Jesus at his word means believing in Jesus’ word. Even though he did not see his son’s recovery with his own eyes, he believedin Jesus’ word. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Heb 11:1) The royal official was sure that his son would live even though he didn’t see it. This is the essence of faith. Faith is to believe in Jesus’ word even though we do not see its result. Abraham was known as an ancestor of faith. He had such faith that he obeyed God’s word and went, even though he did not know where he was going. He took God at his word and left. The official likewise took Jesus at his word and left.

What happened to the royal official who took Jesus at his word and went home? Look at verses 51-53. “***While he was still on the way, his servant 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, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.”*** Imagine how the official felt on his way home. He went to Jesus with an emergency call. But Jesus didn’t accompany him, but just sent him back with a promise. On the way Satan attacked him with doubt, fear, and sorrow. Whenever doubt arose in his heart, he held to Jesus’ promise “*Your son will live*.” He repeated Jesus’ word as he put one foot after the other. It was a fierce battle against doubt, fear, and sorrow. Our life is like this man’s journey to home. In the middle of fear, anxiety, and doubt we step forward toward our eternal home, the kingdom of God. Sometimes, we fight a fierce spiritual battle against doubt. We hold to God’s promise which is our safeguard and compass. Psalm 119:105 says, “*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”*

God didn’t neglect those who live by faith. While the official was still on the way, he met his servant who brought the great news that his son was living. His joy was more than one could say. He inquired as to the time when his son got better in order to make sure of God’s favor on his son; that it was not by chance or by accident. It was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “*Your son will live.*” Imagine how he reacted when he saw his living son. He must have thrown a great banquet for his son. He must have praised Jesus and helped all his household, his son, his wife, his other children, and all his male and female servants to believe in Jesus. He sought miracles from Jesus. But Jesus gave only his word. When he believed in Jesus’ word, a miracle followed. Are you waiting for a miracle in your life?Believe in Jesus and his word as this official did. If you believe Jesus’ word, believe that you have already received it, it will be yours. The official did not realize that his son got better until he met his servant. While he was struggling with doubt and fear, his son had already gotten better. In the same way we often don’t realize that God already answered our prayer. We don’t realize it until we find it. I have been praying for someone’s conversion. But who knows whether God has already answered my prayer. I just don’t realize it as the official did. Jesus said in Mark 11:22-24. “*Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*” May God bless us when we pray and believe in Jesus’ word. May God bless us when we experience the power of prayer when we do not give up. Amen.

In today’s passage we learned that Jesus blessed the official’s faith. Jesus blesses those who hear his word and believe him. He said in John 5:24, “*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life*.” Jesus came to heal the sick and save the lost. Believe! Those who are sick will be healed. Those who are lost will be saved. For this reason Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood. For our eternal life he rose again from the dead and opened the gate of heaven. Lord, Jesus. Come to us today, heal us, forgive us, and give us new life and eternal life in you. Increase our faith in your words so that we may also see many dying sons and daughters being healed and saved. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.