



# MIRACLES — Healing a Son

Pastor Simon Bardone, Portland, OR

## John 4:46-54

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. 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.

“Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. 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, “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.

This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.

*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 4:46–54.

## Mixed Feelings Miracles

The subject of miracles often brings up mixed emotions in a crowd. From distressed emotions to theological disputes to joy and gratitude, something happens in our hearts when we meditate on miracles.

And in the heart of this man that approached Jesus with a request, something was being stirred.

## Stages of Faith

### Un-Belief

Jesus says in verse 49, that unless the man sees signs and wonders, this royal official will never believe. This is more or less where most of us start out. (Kids seem to have it easier, but as we grow up, we grow more jaded and less trusting).

In a purely philosophical sense, there is no such thing as unbelief. There is either belief in Jesus, or belief in an alternative schema.

It could sound like, “I prayed and nothing happened. So now it’s time to take things into my hands and expedite the situation or look to another source of rescue.”

Un-belief, like love and selfishness, or like courage and fear, integrity and hypocrisy, believing and un-belief always has and plays out in various ways in our lives.

These are not mere abstractions. Who or what we believe or don't believe in have very practical implications in our lives, especially in our relationships.

## Crisis Belief & Sign Belief

Something is happening almost immediately in the heart of this royal official.

The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

"Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."

The man **took Jesus at his word [believed]** and departed.

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, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."

This is what is called crisis belief. If the crisis is right, with the right pressures, at the right time, an atheist will believe.

"God, just, I'll do whatever you say if you get me out of this one." I may not even be sure that God exists. But all of a sudden, that prayer sounds very religious.

And when this father realized that his son was healed, he all of a sudden went from crisis belief to sign belief: "Oh my goodness... it actually worked!"

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.

That’s the kind of faith that is born out of circumstantial evidence; a circumstantial miracle. This is good and this is one of the purposes of miracles. It’s believing founded on the experience of seemingly miraculous events.

God orchestrates these signs and miracles in our lives to remind us that he is good!

But this kind of belief is tricky, because not every child gets healed. Not every father’s child gets healed, and certainly that didn’t happen in the first century.

So what does that do to one’s faith? How do we move on from that?

Even if our sons and daughters and friends and family are healed, eventually all of our bodies decay. And then we can be tempted to rationalize, “maybe it was just a coincidence.”

## **Refined Belief**

As much as we rejoice and believe in and welcome miracles, we know that they’re not the end of the story.

Which brings us to refined belief; faith that has been tested, faith strengthened through the forge of life. “I trust that my heavenly Father is present and at work in this painful situation.” If that’s not a miracle, I’m not sure what is.

That sort of security, peace, and confidence in God is unreal at times. All of the ups and downs, the stuff of life, the garbage that happens to us do not affect us because our lives are so deeply anchored and confident in his goodness through it all. It’s a miracle of the heart.

## **1 Peter 1:6-7**

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Pe 1:6–7.

# **The Most Pain In Life**

To see someone we love suffer and endure pain and then be taken away from us; this is some of the worst pain in life. Betrayal, jealousy, and emotional damage can be just as painful if not worse than physical pain.

And how do we trust in God's goodness through the painful circumstances of the relationships in our life? What does it look like to live anchored in God's goodness then? That's a miracle of the heart.

Pastor Simon shared about how after a period of life of betrayal and fragmentation of all the relationships around him, he went out on an invitation to the Holy Land of Israel. The Lord prompted Simon to share his story with a pastor from Every Nation Vancouver. After spilling all of the drama to Pastor Counselor Greg Mitchell, he encouraged Pastor Simon to repent.

And while Pastor Simon was confused — after all, he was the victim here — the realization that he needed to repent led him to do so, which changed his life. And he was able to let God heal and change his heart.

“I don't hate the church. I didn't leave the ministry. I don't hold bitterness against that man. I think my heart softened in that moment.”

We don't have to go through life with hard hearts, ready to retaliate, living out of the mindset, “I'm never going to be hurt again.” The miracle of a changed and softened heart is manifested as a refined belief.

Why do children still suffer and die?

We don't know. But a refined belief allows us to reframe suffering and loss in light of a Good Father and anchors us in God's goodness, joy, and love.

Lord, help our unbelief. Teach us to trust you.