

THE SECOND SIGN OF JESUS

John 4:43-54

Key Verse 4:50

“Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.”

Last week we studied the last lesson from the book of Nehemiah. Let us thank God that he wants to use each one of us like Nehemiah as a spiritual leader for this generation. From Nehemiah, we learn his uncompromising spirit, with which he mobilized the people to build the wall, rejected all challenges by the enemies, worked together with Ezra the priest for the spiritual restoration of the people, and finally took decisive action against the secularism to re-initiate God's Word and commandments. We will continue to study the book of Nehemiah, e.g. at the Junior Leadership Camp and at the GLEF 2020, so that we, like Nehemiah, will struggle spiritually to the end against humanism, relativism and all grievances in the house and works of God and be used as a holy people of God for the spiritual renewal and revival of this generation.

Today we continue the study of the Gospel of John. We want to study the second of the seven miraculous signs of Jesus, which were handed down to us by the evangelist John. First, we would like to recall some aspects of the previous chapters. John chapter 2 tells us about the first sign of Jesus: Jesus transformed water into wine at the wedding in Cana, blessing the obedience of the servants. We had also learned that Jesus went up to Jerusalem on the Passover and cleansed the temple from merchants and moneychangers. The Jews demanded that Jesus should legitimize this cleansing by a sign. Then Jesus spoke of the ultimate sign of his death on the cross and his resurrection. Jesus also did other signs, because of which many believed in him. But

Jesus did not confide in the people who were seeking signs, because he knew them all. The sign-seeking faith is not enough because it is not based on the Word of God and ultimately only strives to improve the living conditions.

In chapter 4 we also learned how Jesus served a thirsty Samaritan woman so that she repented of her worship of men, drank the living water of Jesus and was transformed into a missionary for her city. Many came to Jesus through her testimony. Eventually these people believed and testified: (John 4:42b): "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

In today's passage, John 4:43-54, we learn about Jesus' spiritual struggle to help people not to believe superficially on the basis of signs and wonders or to look at Jesus in a purely human way, but to believe in Jesus on the basis of the Word of God and to know who Jesus is: Jesus is the Christ and Messiah, who saves us from the power of sin and death and gives us new and eternal life. We also want to get to know the faith of a Royal Official who believed in the Word of Jesus absolutely and experienced God's healing power in the life of his terminally ill son. May God grant us personal faith in Jesus on the basis of the Word of God, so that in this summer we can experience the healing and transforming power of Jesus in young people, and so that Germany can be raised as a shepherd nation and Europe as a continent sending missionaries.

1. A prophet has no honor in his own country (43-45)

Let us look at verses 43 and 44: "After the two days he left for Galilee. Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country." Jesus came from Samaria. The Samaritans had not seen any sign of Jesus, but when they heard Jesus' words, they came to believe in Jesus. Strengthened and encouraged by this event, Jesus went up to Galilee. Jesus knew that the people in his homeland considered him as a human, that is, the son of the carpenter. In Matthew 13 we read that Jesus came to his hometown and taught in their synagogue. But the people were startled and asked: "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" And they took offense at him." (Matt 13:54b-57a).

We too must not look at Jesus in a human way but must see Him with spiritual eyes. In our time many people look at Jesus humanly and superficially. For example, they regard him as a historic person, as the founder of a religion, as one who improves the standard of living, as a peace activist, as an environmentalist or as a representative of an alternative lifestyle. Matthew 11:5.6 says: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." Whoever has a certain expectation of Jesus, instead of humbly learning from Jesus through the Word of God and through the community of life, will sooner or later bump into Jesus and be annoyed. But the one who hears, accepts and obeys Jesus' words will experience that His words are the words of life, which give us strength, comfort, confidence and a living hope. The words of Jesus also give us clear directions for our life, let us grow in sanctification and change

us into a new creation in Christ. In the past I used to look at Jesus in a very human and superficial way. He was a good person for me, who took care of the poor and the sick. But without a Word of God I had no personal relationship with Jesus and lived in sin, separated and cut off from Him. Through the initiative love of God I was allowed to meet Jesus personally on the basis of a word of God. In Mark 8:29, Peter testifies about Jesus: "You are the Christ." Jesus became my Christ, King, Savior and Redeemer. In Him I became a new creation. Now I may learn from Jesus all my life: His love for the lost, His shepherd heart, His obedience, His devotion, His vision and hope.

Jesus is the creator of the world and of our life. We are His property. We are created to honor God through our lives, worship Him and do His will. Jesus did not come to improve our human conditions, but to solve our basic sin problem and to restore our broken relationship with God. As God's children, we love, value and obey the Word of God. Then we can live as a holy people of God, proclaiming His benefits and being used to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission to the ends of the earth. The one who looks at Jesus only humanly and uses Jesus for the improvement of his living standard will eventually become angry with Jesus and fall away, even despise God's servants and slander God's people. John 6 reports how Jesus fed a large crowd with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. They all saw the sign of the multiplication of the bread and were so thrilled by Jesus that they said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." (John 6:14b). But when Jesus realized that they wanted to make Him their "bread king" because of this miraculous sign, He withdrew again. Sign seeking faith is not the faith Jesus wants. Sign seeking faith is "beginner faith", which does not bring about a permanent change in life but strives for the improvement of conditions. When many people turned away from Jesus, Jesus asked the Twelve, "You do not want to leave, too, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you

are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68,69). Bible study produces faith in the Word of God. God's words give us personal faith and the assurance of salvation that Jesus is the Messiah and the Christ of God.

When our first missionaries came from Korea to Germany more than 40 years ago to serve the students with Bible study, they were often misunderstood by proud people who said, "What are you doing here? Why did you come? Germany is a Christian country. We do not need you. If we have questions about faith, we'll go to our pastor." God's people have been subject to many repressions and slander. However, they did not let go from their shepherd heart, they did not compromise, but prayed and served the work of raising disciples through Bible study teams and life together. There they experienced God's mighty work through his word. God led the local people to a personal and living faith in Jesus, changed cultural Christians and atheists into disciples of Jesus and trained them to become responsible spiritual leaders and servants of the Word of God.

There are even Christians who use Jesus for their own purposes and goals, e.g. to improve their living conditions, to maintain social contacts or to find a partner in the church of God. But the focus of living together in the church of God must never be a personal advantage, but always the formation of the body of Christ through obedience to Jesus' word and his world mission command. We serve disciple making through the community of life, just as our Lord Jesus did. We live in community in the house of God as Jesus did with his disciples. And we go out to the campus because Jesus has commanded us to be His witnesses. We form Bible study teams with the students because we believe that God's Word will bring them to life and thereby raise disciples of Jesus and spiritual leaders in every university and college.

Let's read verses 44 and 45 together again: "Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country. 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." In this part, we learn who Jesus really is. He is the world's Savior, the Messiah and Christ. Let us repent of all sign seeking faith in wanting to have our conditions and living standard improved by Jesus. We must believe in Jesus on the basis of the Word of God, so that our faith is not wavering, but deeply rooted in the Word of God. God may bless 1:1 BS teams, so that young people can meet Jesus personally through the living Word of God, accept his forgiveness of sin, experience his power to change, and be raised to God's great army of Bible teachers and spiritual leaders for this generation.

2. The faith of the royal official (46-54)

Let us read verses 46 and 47: "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." At Cana in Galilee, the ground was prepared by the first miraculous sign of Jesus at the wedding. The news of Jesus' arrival spread like wildfire even to Capernaum. A royal official heard about Jesus. Because the son of this official was mortally ill with fever, the official was very desperate and helpless. But as an official in royal service, he did not go to his boss, King Herod Antipas. As a civil servant he certainly had private health insurance and could have gone to excellent doctors. But this official heard of Jesus' coming and set out to meet Jesus at Cana. We see here a burning father-heart in this man. Perhaps he was his first and only son. The official also recognized that, in view of the danger to his son's life, his secure job as a civil servant, his possessions and his recognition by the people were worth nothing at all. In this situation he needed the help of the Messiah, the true king. If Jesus came and helped him, his sick son could be healed. With this heart, the royal official hurried up to

Cana. The path led steadily uphill: from 143 m in Kapernaum to 633 m in Cana. According to Google Maps, the distance is about 40 km and it takes more than 8 hours on foot. In addition, the sun was probably burning, and it was hot. But all this did not stop the official from seeking Jesus' help. On the way he thought of his son without end: "Would there be enough time? Would he find Jesus? Would Jesus listen to him?" All these thoughts must have gone through the Father's mind.

The man came to Jesus. The Bible does not describe the encounter with Jesus in detail. But we can imagine that the Father humbly fell to the ground in front of Jesus and made his request from the bottom of his heart: "Lord, my son is terminally ill. He has a high fever. Please come down and see him. Only you can help him!" How did Jesus react? What did he say to the royal official? Let's read verse 48: "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." Wow. Jesus reacted differently from what we would expect. Jesus rebuked this man's sign seeking faith. But the royal clerk did not defend himself against Jesus' rebuke. He could have said, "Is this how you talk to an official of the king? Who do you think I am?" No, we hear nothing of that. The official didn't get discouraged either. He kept asking for the mercy of the Messiah. Let's look at his words in verse 49: "The man said to him, Lord, come down before my child dies." The man knew he was completely unworthy and had no right to ask anything of Jesus. But he had a humble and persistent faith, saying, "Lord, come down before my child dies."

In the gospel of Mark chapter 7 we encounter a woman from Syro-Phoenicia, that is from pagan territory. When this woman came to Jesus and prayed for her daughter, who was tormented by an evil spirit, Jesus said: "First let the children (that is, the children of Israel) be filled; it is not right to take the bread from the children and throw it to the dogs." In human terms, Jesus had offended this Syro-Phoenician woman. The woman could have got up, been outraged by Jesus' word and

gone away. But she wasn't hurt but testified to her unshakeable faith by answering Jesus and saying, "Yes, Lord, but the dogs under the table are eating the children's bread." She compared herself to a dog that had no right to demand anything from Jesus, but which nevertheless eats from the fallen crumbs of the children of Israel.

What did Jesus say to the royal official and how did he react? Let us look at verse 50: "Jesus said to him: Go, your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went." Jesus didn't go to Capernaum himself, but he said to the royal official, "Go, your son lives." Jesus taught the Father to have faith in the word of Jesus. Had the Father not had faith, he would probably have replied, "How do I know he is alive? Wouldn't you rather come with me?" But here we see: "The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went." This reveals the officer's beautiful faith in the word of Jesus. What God also wants from us is to have faith in the word of God. God's words are not empty words, but words of life. Through His Word, God created heaven and earth out of nothing. Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." Through the everlasting and imperishable Word of God we too are born again to a new life: 1 Peter 1:23 says, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." According to Hebrews 4:12, the Word of God is also "...alive and strong and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of bone and marrow, and is a judge of the thoughts and senses of the heart." Satan fears nothing so much as the word of God. When Jesus was tempted by Satan, Jesus clearly rejected all cunning attacks of the enemy with the Word of God. Matthew 4:4: "...it is written (Deuteronomy 8:3): "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Let us, like the royal official, believe in the Word of God absolutely and experience the mighty work of God in our sheep and children through His Word. Jesus worked on the Father, not on the Son, to establish faith in the Word of Jesus in his heart. God's servants also served and serves us and our next generation to help us to believe in the Word of God absolutely. Jesus' power to change was revealed. For example, God worked mightily through GLEF last year, when God's Word from the 5 books of Moses was studied deeply. Some came to Jesus with their sins and testified to God's grace. God also works in some young people through Bible study so that they were able to make a decision to be baptized as a sign of their new life. Faith in the Word of God from Mt 6:33 / Mk 11:22 also helped me to pray to the end for a young man for whom I almost gave up all hope. He could experience God's help through our prayer and finish his studies victoriously. Faith in the Word of God gives us again and again the confidence to overcome the visible reality and to go out in faith and serve children and sheep with the Word of God.

Let us read the key verse 50 again: "Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed." With these words, Jesus encourages each of us to have faith for our children and sheep. He teaches us faith so that we, like the royal official, do not doubt Jesus' words, but go with the beautiful faith of the official to our campus, to our university and college, to prophesy God's Word in one-to-one Bible study teams. God gave us His word from Ezekiel 37:10 as a key verse for this year: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet-a vast army." In faith and obedience to this Word of God we want to go and experience God's work through His Word, that spiritually dry bones are made alive through God's Word and that on every campus an Abraham, a Sarah of faith and twelve disciples of Jesus will be raised.

We may hear the word of Jesus to the royal officials personally: "Go, your son lives." "Go,

your sheep lives!" May God help us not to make Jesus sad by sign seeking faith, but to believe, pray, go and experience God's powerful work in young people based on the Word of God.

What happened when the Father believed in the Word of Jesus and went to see his son? Let us look at verse 51: "While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living." As the Father went down by faith, some of his servants came to meet him. And what glad tidings did they have? "Your child lives!" Let's look at verse 52: "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." This was a clear testimony that the boy had not recovered "on his own" but that it had happened exactly in the hour when Jesus had worked and spoken to the Father: "Go, your son lives!"

Many of us also think of our child and of our Bible students who are in a spiritual crisis, under the temptation of Satan or in bad company. Many have a burning shepherd's heart, as we are also told of the righteous Job for his seven sons and three daughters. Do you know what Job did when one of his children had a birthday party? Job chapter 1:5 tells us that he would get up early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to their number, because Job thought, "My sons may have sinned and rejected God in their hearts. So Job did at all times!" Many parents carry such heartaches for their children. The greatest and most important thing we can do for them is to offer the prayer of faith for them at all times and that God keeps them in the midst of all the temptations of this world.

We think of Nick Vujcic. He was born without arms and legs. At his birth his parents (his mother a nurse; his father a lay preacher) were in shock. But they always looked at their son with the hope of God that came from their faith. At the time of his greatest life crisis, Nick remembered his parents' love, their prayers for him, and their words of hope that made them see him as a beautiful

creature of God. Today, God uses Nick as a motivator and evangelist who travels around the world to motivate others and preach the gospel to them. We also think of Monica, the mother of Augustine. Her son was capable and highly gifted. But in search of the truth he turned away from the faith and led a dissolute worldly life. But God blessed Monika's persistent and tearful prayer for her son. Augustine converted and became an influential church father.

The royal official knew that only Jesus could help his son. By faith he had come to Jesus. And now he learned that Jesus had blessed his faith. The servants came to meet him and brought him the joyful message: "Your child lives!" Let's look at verse 53: "Then the Father perceived that it was the hour when Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives. And he believed with all his household.'" In the beginning, the official's faith was an emergency faith. Out of necessity he had set out to meet Jesus. But this faith grew into faith in Jesus' words. The father believed in Jesus' word, "Go, your son lives." From this belief in the word he grew in faith in salvation, so that the royal official and his whole house were saved.

May God grant us such humble and absolute faith in the word of Jesus, so that we may overcome all doubts and unbelief in this world and go to experience the work of spiritual renewal and revival in our whole house, on our campus and in the 1,700 universities in Europe, even into the Muslim world. May God give us absolute and humble faith in the word of Jesus: "Go, your son lives! Go, your campus lives!"

Let's read verse 50 again: "Jesus replied, You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed."