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The Honor Due Him

John 4:43-54

Intro: Clearly, the focus of our text today is on the miraculous healing of the nobleman's son but, before we can get into that, we must first establish what is happening in vs43-45. It may seem that these verses are merely transitional: getting Jesus from His ministry in Samaria to the next stage of His ministry in Galilee but there is more going on here than what meets the eye. These verses do give a reason for the Lord's decision to move to Galilee but there is also a difficulty hidden between the lines that have given theologians and apologists fits over the years. Some people reject the Bible because they claim that the concepts presented in it are difficult to understand and that many passages appear to be contradictory. Thus, they accuse God is being difficult and unfair but that is just not the case.

There are 2 holes in this argument. **1)** The basic message of the Bible is not difficult to understand. It may be difficult to accept but that's not the same thing. How could God have made **John 3:16** any clearer? He simply tells us that He loves us so much He sent His Son to die in our place so that whoever commits himself to Him won't be separated from Him eternally but will have new life. God's made the basic Bible message so clear, even a child can understand it and many do. That's not to say that there are no difficult passages in the Bible but even those are blessings. **2)** We should be glad the Bible has sections that are deep enough to challenge us and keep us learning through a lifetime of Bible study. The fact that this book is so infinitely provocative and challenging is proof that it came from God.

The difficulty here is the reason for Jesus' return to Galilee (**44**). The problem is that all the other Gospels report the same reason John gives for Christ's move to Galilee but in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus says this of Galilee as a reason of why He had to go somewhere else (**Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24**), while the move is reversed in John.

Another difficulty is that Jesus says He's going to Galilee because He will have no honor there. But the next verse says that "**the Galileans received Him having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast.**" What's the solution?

Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so to, theologians abhor unanswered questions; so many rush to fill the empty space with natural reasoning. Some commentators say Jesus is going back to Galilee to prove what He had said about the region but if that's the case, vs45 would actually prove Him wrong, for the Galileans did receive Him. Others insist that **his own country** was actually Judea, not Galilee but He's known as Jesus of Nazareth (in Galilee). None of these explanations seem adequate but there is one that does. Could it be that Jesus returned to Galilee simply because the Galileans needed the Gospel? It's true that He was not well received by them before so it would stand to reason that the Galileans clearly needed Him above everyone else. Does this make sense? It does & it also gives us insight to the motivations of the Lord's ministry that should speak to us personally.

What principles can we glean from this insight into the Lord's motivations for ministry? **1)** Jesus was determined to do the Father's will regardless of the consequences. He'd determined to do God's will regardless of apparent success or failure. When Jesus first ministered in Galilee, He was received so badly by the Galileans, they almost executed Him (Lk 4:18-29). This was how He was received in His old stomping grounds and it was probably fresh on His mind when He returned. Also, the great reception He'd received in Samaria would also be fresh. It had to be a great temptation to simply stay and minister there. But what did Jesus do? He moved on to Galilee because He was determined to do God's will regardless of the consequences.

Do we do that? If something does not work, we tend to chuck it and try something else, and we often do the same thing spiritually. If our witness is not readily received, we're quick to shake the dust off and go somewhere else. That's not what Jesus did. Sure, we should keep looking for more effective ways to present the gospel. But still, we must learn from Christ's example that even when we've done our best and haven't had success in our witnessing, we're to keep on trying. Our job in witnessing for Jesus is not to convert people. That's God's job. He does the converting. But, we have a job to do, and our job is to bring as many as we can into contact with the gospel. And we shouldn't stop doing our job even if it looks to us like we are not doing any good (Gal 6:9).

2) Another reason Jesus went to Galilee was that He was motivated by their great need. He once used an illustration of a doctor to describe the focus of

His ministry (**Mark 2:17**). The inhabitants of Galilee were lost without the Gospel and that's what motivated Jesus to return. Do we have a good sense of the deep need of those around us (to pray)?

3) Jesus was motivated by specific statements of Scripture. We see this more clearly in Matthew's Gospel. In the 4th chapter, Matthew says that Jesus' early ministry in Galilee was in direct response to a specific OT prophecy from the book of **Isaiah (9:1-2)**, Clearly Jesus knew the Scriptures and studied them for the light they gave on the course of His ministry. It was in response to this verse and many hundreds of verses like it that He made His decisions.

What does this have to do with us? One might argue that the Bible does not contain such specific prophecies about what each of us should do and about the course of our lives. That's true. Still, the Bible does contain principles by which God instructs us how we are to organize our lives, set our priorities, witness to others, and serve Him. If we will read the Bible and allow God to interpret it and apply it to our own situation, then we'll have the same type of direction Jesus had and we will be able to obey God on the basis of His written revelation just as Jesus Christ did.

That's really the only way to genuine blessing in the Christian life. Success, even in preaching the gospel, will not satisfy indefinitely. Neither will martyrdom. We will find blessing only when we allow God to speak to us through the Scriptures and obey Him. That's what we are called to do, what we've been saved to do.

Was Jesus' proverb in **vs44** correct? The fact of **vs45** would seem to disagree but does it really? The 1st time Jesus tried to minister in Nazareth, the people failed to honor Him the way they should have because they felt so familiar with Him. "**Is this not Joseph's son?**" (**Lk 4: 22b**). Their reaction to Jesus revealed that they were not familiar with Him at all. If they had been, they would have received His word gladly and responded to them favorably. Now, it appears they've had a change of heart; that they are now willing to receive Him but the reason John gives for this is telling. Why do they receive Him? Because they had seen **all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast.**

Right away we understand that if there is any faith involved in their reception

of Jesus – it was a mercenary faith! Their reception of Jesus was solely dependant on the wonder that came from seeing all the signs He had preformed and not on any realization that Jesus was actually the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Unlike the Samaritans, who were quick to recognize Jesus for who He truly was, the motivations of the Galileans were drenched in self-interest. Their shallow intentions reflect their gross misunderstanding of Jesus: they received Him but they didn't accept Him. They gave Him honor of a sort but it was not the honor He was due. Thus their acceptance was actually a rejection.

46-47- John introduces a certain nobleman. He's not a ruler of the Jews like Nicodemus. The word used here relates to royalty; meaning this man was probably a royal official (maybe serving in Herod's court). So here's a guy who's no doubt rich with great influence. Yet neither his rank nor riches are able to exempt him from the common sorrows of mankind. The rich and powerful have just as much sickness and just as much need for Jesus as anyone else does. The amazing thing is that this man not only recognized his **need** but he also accurately sensed its solution – Jesus!

Now, maybe he had heard how Jesus had turned the water into wine or what Jesus had done in Jerusalem; we don't know. But, when he heard Jesus was in Cana, he made the 4 hour trip (25 mls) from Capernaum and begged Jesus to accompany him back to Capernaum and heal his son. Of course, the fact that he came at all is impressive. Here's a high official of the royal court, who exercised great authority, traveling twenty-five miles to request a miracle from a carpenter. On the other hand, although the man's faith was real it was also very weak. Like the Samaritan woman, his faith was uninformed. He assumed Jesus was limited to healing on location, and that He had to touch his son to heal him. In fact, this royal official (this father) is guilty of receiving and using Jesus for his own purposes. Thus, it became the purpose of Jesus to teach this nobleman and to help his faith to grow.

48- Sounds harsh? It's the equivalent of calling him a curiosity seeker although it was addressed more to the crowd than to him in particular (you is plural = you all). Jesus is not criticizing the man, He's criticizing belief that is based on the witness (signs) and not based on the object of the witness (Jesus). He's criticizing belief that comes from wrong motivations. Jesus is not rejecting the man or his request, He's rejecting the kind of belief he

initially displays.

49- Jesus' apparently harsh response was merely a test of the sincerity of his faith. How'd he react? Thankfully, the nobleman proved himself to be truly noble; he was not offended, nor did he try to justify himself to Jesus. He stood his ground, reiterated his need and humbled himself to receive an answer however Jesus chose to give it to him.

50-52- The next lesson Jesus taught him was that one must believe first, then he will see the results. We've all heard the worldly proverb: seeing is believing; but that's exactly what Jesus was condemning in **vs48**! This statement is a true description of the thinking of most people. What Jesus is teaching in **vs50** is that in spiritual things the order is reversed: believing is seeing, for its only as one believes in Jesus that he will then see spiritual things happening. Thus, Jesus told the father, "**Go your way; your son lives**" (**50**). The nobleman was called to believe without sight. It was hard, but that's exactly what he did. "**The man believed the word that Jesus spoke and he went his way.**" There was no "sign" to see – there was only the word of the Word. And this man believed it and responded positively to it!

Now, if it had been just a man speaking, the belief of the nobleman would have been **absurd**. No one believes without sight. Yet in spiritual matters it is entirely logical to do so—because we are dealing not with a man but with God. Jesus is God. Thus, to believe Him is the most logical thing in the universe.

Believing in Jesus is also the most effective way to set your mind at rest, even when faced with sorrow. Note that after the nobleman heard and believed Jesus' word, he simply continued on his way. He believed Jesus so implicitly that he simply picked up his work where he had left it and went on about his business. It's obvious that he *didn't* rush home; for altho this conversation took place about 1 PM and the journey was only 4 hours, the nobleman didn't get back home until the next day. When he did return it was to learn that his son had been healed instantly the day before at the very hour in which Jesus had spoken to him. Of course, the details the father heard weren't any further confirmation regarding his son but they were further confirmation regarding the power of the unique Son of God. In fact, the details he received prompted this royal official to lead his entire

household to the same realization and the same conclusion that he had come to – namely, that Jesus was to be believed!

53- This is John's way of saying to put the 2 miracles—changing water into wine and healing the nobleman's son—side by side. We're to see them in relationship to each other and compare them. The 1st is a scene of joy, festivity, and happiness. It's a wedding! The second scene is filled with sickness, desperation, anxiety, and the dreadful shadow of death. One is a picture of joy, the other of sorrow. In comparing the 2 we're to understand that life is as filled with the one as it is with the other and that Jesus, the One who is the answer to all human need, is needed in both circumstances. Jesus has a place in all circumstances. If we invite him to our times of innocent happiness, he will increase our joy. If we call on him in our times of sorrow, anxiety, or bereavement, he can bring consolation, comfort, and a joy that is not of this world." In pointing to this truth John is further advancing his claim that Jesus is indeed "the Savior of the world"; for Jesus is the Savior of all men, at all times, and in all circumstances.

What the Galileans saw in Jesus was not Who He truly was; it was Who they selfishly wanted Him to be. Thus, it was impossible for them to give Him the honor (glory) He was due. The nobleman was different. Sure his faith was weak and misinformed but, when push came to shove, he took Jesus at His word. He believed what Jesus told him and then he saw the power of God revealed in his life for his benefit. This is all that He asks of anyone.

Jesus was not rebuking a failing or faltering faith, something any of us can experience at one time or another. No, what He was rebuking was a faith that rests on inappropriate objects – faith that is inappropriately motivated. Let us worship God not for the wonders He can perform but for the wonder that He is! He is a God who is worthy of worship even when there is no "sign" – even when our request goes unanswered. Even in these instances, He is still our God – the true sign and wonder.

We all experience sorrow and sickness. Oftentimes, we come to Jesus and find Him saying, "I know what I am doing. I am working it all out." The Bible says it another way, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose**" (Rom 8:28). There will always be circumstances in which we

will not **see** that this is true. But, we are still to go on about our business. We may have to pass thru the night of death into the bright day of the next world before we see how our prayers are answered. Yet, we are still to *believe* and *know* that Jesus has heard our prayers and that He has answered them ***according to His purpose***. 😊