

**John 4:43-54**  
**(Proverbs 3:1-6; Hebrews 11:1,2&6)**  
**“Taking Jesus at His Word”**

**Introduction**

We are all familiar with the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” In teaching life’s lessons, that is often true. However, in the deepest relationships of life, and especially in learning the ways of God’s kingdom, the opposite is often true: “A word is worth a thousand pictures.” How often relationships are broken, or never become what they could be, because we fail to understand the power of words, especially such words as, “I’m sorry,” or “I was wrong,” or “I miss you,” or especially, “I love you.”

In our text, we see people longing for pictures rather than words. They are sick of teachers with nothing but words and long for a prophet who will show them miracles, signs and wonders. If Jesus will do the kinds of mighty deeds done by Moses, Elijah and Elisha, then they will believe what he says. If not, they will pass him by and look for someone else. Ironically, Jesus has shown them such pictures, those extraordinary works of God that John calls “signs” pointing to who Jesus is. But the people of Galilee want *more* pictures. They have already seen his miracle in the village of Cana, where he changed water to wine, and those of them who celebrated Passover in Jerusalem have also seen “all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast” (4:45). Yet, as Jesus himself testified, “a prophet has no honor in his own hometown” (4:44). What they have seen has aroused their interest. But now they want more. *And here’s the point:* Faith that merely rests on what one has seen turns out not to be lasting, life-transforming faith, but merely a temporary interest that soon fades once the spectacle is over and one’s attention turns to other things. The people of Galilee are not yet ready simply to take Jesus at his word. And the question this this morning is whether we are ready to take him at his word.

Our lesson comes into sharper focus as we listen to this story of a desperate father seeking to save the life of his dying son. This is where we most often meet the living God: not in flights of mystic contemplation, nor in strenuous religious exercises, but rather in the pressure and mess of ordinary living: the struggle of a marriage, the loss of a job, the ache of loneliness, or – as here – the anxiety of a parent for a child in danger. It is at such times when the picture seems to paint a very different story than of a God who loves us that we are challenged to fall back upon God’s Word. *Don’t miss this crucial point:* Only when we step out in faith, taking the Lord at his word, do we then have hope of seeing him move in power, meeting us and fulfilling his promise of new life at the point of our deepest need.

If the previous story of the Samaritan villagers depicts the way we come to know Jesus, then this story of a desperate father seeking help for his son shows us how we can move in life’s crises from fear to faith, placing our trust in the one John calls, “the Savior of the world” (4:42). Look closely at this official as he seeks out Jesus, especially noting four stages of his journey from fear to faith.

## Body

1. **In the midst of a crisis where it appeared that God had forgotten him, this father was willing to set out on pilgrimage, believing that Jesus *could* help him (v.47).**
2. **In the face of a situation where it appeared that Jesus had rejected him, he persevered, believing that Jesus not only *could* but *would* help him (v.49).**
3. **In response to a mere word spoken by Jesus, a simple and as yet unproven promise, he believed that Jesus *had* helped him (v.50).**
4. **Finally, in the light of his encounter with Jesus and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, he and his entire household believed that Jesus is the Savior of the world (v.53).**

## Conclusion

The Scriptures are filled with the promises of God to those willing to step out and take him at his word. God loves to meet us in those places where we know that if he does not show up, it's all over. Just as we can only help each other when we come to an end of ourselves and are willing to humble ourselves and ask for help, so too the Lord waits for us to recognize our brokenness and need, our spiritual poverty and the riches of his glory. Those who cry out for his mercy, the Lord hears and answers. But we must take him at his word, whatever picture our circumstances seem to paint – even worst possible scenarios filling our hearts with fear. The Lord of life is saying to us today, “Come to me, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Only those of us who take him at his word find that promised rest for our souls, along with life and joy and peace.

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