

John 4:40-53

by St. John Chrysostom

The sermon explores the profound faith of the Samaritans in Christ and contrasts it with the skepticism of the Jews, emphasizing the importance of believing without needing signs.

Scripture: John 4:48

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Christ's Miracles"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the Samaritans' faith in Jesus, contrasting it with the Jews' lack of belief despite witnessing miracles. He emphasizes the importance of sincere faith and belief in Christ as the Savior of the world, regardless of signs or wonders. Chrysostom highlights the nobleman's journey from doubt to strong faith in Jesus' healing power, showcasing the transformative nature of encountering Christ's miracles and teachings.

Transcript

So when the Samaritans had come unto Him, they besought Him that He would tarry with them: and He abode there two days. And many more believed because of His own Word; and said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Now after two days He departed thence, and went into Galilee.

Nothing is worse than envy and malice, nothing more mischievous than vainglory; it is wont to mar ten thousand good things. So the Jews, who excelled the Samaritans in knowledge, and had been always familiar with the Prophets, were shown from this cause inferior to them. For these believed even on the testimony of the woman, and without having seen any sign, came forth beseeching Christ to tarry with them; but the Jews, when they had beheld His wonders, not only did not detain Him among them, but even drove Him away, and used every means to cast Him forth from their land, although His very Coming had been for their sake. The Jews expelled Him, but these even entreated Him to tarry with them. Was it not then rather fitting, tell me, that He should receive those who asked and besought Him, than that He should wait upon those who plotted against and repulsed Him, while to those who loved and desired to retain Him He gave not Himself? Surely this would not have been worthy of His tender care; He therefore both accepted them, and tarried with them two days. They desired to keep Him among them continually, (for this the Evangelist has shown by saying, that they besought Him that He would tarry with them,) but this He endured not, but stayed with them only two days; and in these many more believed on Him. Yet there was no likelihood that these would have believed, since they had seen no sign, and had hostile

feelings towards the Jews; but still, inasmuch as they gave in sincerity their judgment on His words, this stood not in their way, but they received a notion which surmounted their hindrances, and vied with each other to reverence Him the more. For, says the Evangelist, they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of your saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. The scholars overshot their instructress. With good reason might they condemn the Jews, both by their believing on, and their receiving Him. The Jews, for whose sake He had contrived the whole scheme, continually were for stoning Him, but these, when He was not even intending to come to them, drew Him to themselves. And they, even with signs, remain uncorrected; these, without signs, manifested great faith respecting Him, and glory in this very thing that they believe without them; while the others ceased not asking for signs and tempting Him.

Such need is there everywhere of an honest soul; and if truth lay hold on such an one, she easily masters it; or if she masters it not, this is owing not to any weakness of truth, but to want of candor in the soul itself. Since the sun too, when he encounters clear eyes, easily enlightens them; if he enlightens them not, it is the fault of their infirmity, not of his weakness.

Hear then what these say; We know that this is of a truth the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Do you see how they at once understood that He should draw the world to Him, that He came to order aright our common salvation, that He intended not to confine His care to the Jews, but to sow His Word everywhere? The Jews did not so, but going about to establish their own righteousness, submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God; while these confess that all are deserving of punishment, declaring with the Apostle, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace. Romans 3:23-24 For by saying that He was the Saviour of the world, they showed that it was of a lost world, and He not simply a Saviour, but one of the very mightiest. For many had come to save, both Prophets and Angels ; but this, says one, is the True Saviour, who affords the true salvation, not that which is but for a time. This proceeded from pure faith. And in both ways are they admirable; because they believed, and because they did so without signs, (whom Christ also calls blessed, saying, Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,) John 20:29, and because they did so sincerely. Though they had heard the woman say doubtfully, Is not this the Christ? they did not also say, we too suspect, or, we think, but, we know, and not merely, we know, but, we know that this is of a truth the Saviour of the world. They acknowledged Christ not as one of the many, but as the Saviour indeed. Yet whom had they seen saved? They had but heard His words, and yet they spoke as they would have spoken had they beheld many and great marvels. And why do not the Evangelists tell us these words, and that He discoursed admirably? That you may learn that they pass by many important matters, and yet have declared the whole to us by the event. For He persuaded an entire people and a whole city by His words. When His hearers are not persuaded, then the writers are constrained to mention what was said, lest any one from the insensibility of the hearers should give a judgment against Him who addressed them.

Now after two days He departed thence and went into Galilee.

John 4:44

For Jesus Himself testified that a Prophet has no honor in his own country.

Wherefore is this added? Because He departed not unto Capernaum, but into Galilee, and thence to Cana. For that you may not enquire why He tarried not with His own people, but tarried with the Samaritans, the Evangelist puts the cause, saying that they gave no heed unto Him; on this account He

went not there, that their condemnation might not be the greater. For I suppose that in this place He speaks of Capernaum as His country. Now, to show that there He received no honor, hear Him say, And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell. Matthew 11:23 He calls it His own country, because there He set forth the Word of the Dispensation, and more especially dwelt upon it. What then, says some one, do we not see many admired among their kindred? In the first place such judgments must not be formed from rare instances; and again, if some have been honored in their own, they would have been much more honored in a strange country, for familiarity is wont to make men easily despised.

John 4:45

Then when He had come into Galilee, the Galilæans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast, for they also came unto the feast.

Do you see that these men so ill spoken of are found most to come to Him? For one said, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? John 1:46, and another, Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet. John 7:52 These things they said insulting Him, because He was supposed by the many to be of Nazareth, and they also reproached Him with being a Samaritan; You are a Samaritan, said one, and hast a devil. John 8:48 Yet behold, both Samaritans and Galilæans believe, to the shame of the Jews, and Samaritans are found better than Galilæans, for the first received Him through the words of the woman, the second when they had seen the miracles which He did.

John 4:46

So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine.

The Evangelist reminds the hearer of the miracle to exalt the praise of the Samaritans. The men of Cana received Him by reason of the miracles which He had done in Jerusalem and in that place; but not so the Samaritans, they received Him through His teaching alone.

That He came then to Cana, the Evangelist has said, but he has not added the cause why He came. Into Galilee He had come because of the envy of the Jews; but wherefore to Cana? At first He came, being invited to a marriage; but wherefore now? Methinks to confirm by His presence the faith which had been implanted by His miracle, and to draw them to Him the more by coming to them self-invited, by leaving His own country, and by preferring them.

And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

John 4:47

When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto Him and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son.

This person certainly was of royal race, or possessed some dignity from his office, to which the title noble was attached. Some indeed think that this is the man mentioned by Matthew Matthew 8:5, but he is shown to be a different person, not only from his dignity, but also from his faith. That other, even when Christ was willing to go to him, entreats Him to tarry; this one, when He had made no such offer, draws Him to his house. The one says, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but this other even urges Him, saying, Come down ere my son die. In that instance He came down from the mountain, and entered into

Capernaum; but here, as He came from Samaria, and went not into Capernaum but into Cana, this person met Him. The servant of the other was possessed by the palsy, this one's son by a fever.

And he came and besought Him that He would heal his son: for he was at the point of death. What says Christ?

John 4:48

Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.

Yet the very coming and beseeching Him was a mark of faith. And besides, after this the Evangelist witnesses to him, declaring that when Jesus said, Go, your son lives, he believed His word, and went. What then is that which He says here? Either He uses the words as approving of the Samaritans because they believed without signs; or, to touch Capernaum which was thought to be His own city, and of which this person was. Moreover, another man in Luke, who says, Lord, I believe, said besides, help my unbelief. And so if this ruler also believed, yet he believed not entirely or soundly, as is clear from his enquiring at what hour the fever left him, since he desired to know whether it did so of its own accord, or at the bidding of Christ. When therefore he knew that it was yesterday at the seventh hour, then himself believed and his whole house.

Do you see that he believed when his servants, not when Christ spoke? Therefore He rebukes the state of mind with which he had come to Him, and spoken as he did, (thus too He the more drew him on to belief,) because that before the miracle he had not believed strongly. That he came and entreated was nothing wonderful, for parents in their great affection are also wont to resort not only to physicians in whom they have confidence, but also to talk with those in whom they have no confidence, desiring to omit nothing whatever. Indeed, that he came without any strong purpose appears from this, that when Christ had come into Galilee, then he saw Him, whereas if he had firmly believed in Him, he would not, when his child was on the point of death, have hesitated to go into Judæa. Or if he was afraid, this is not to be endured either.

Observe how the very words show the weakness of the man; when he ought, after Christ had rebuked his state of mind, to have imagined something great concerning Him, even if he did not so before, listen how he drags along the ground.

John 4:49

Sir, come down ere my child die.

As though He could not raise him after death, as though He knew not what state the child was in. It is for this that Christ rebukes him and touches his conscience, to show that His miracles were wrought principally for the sake of the soul. For here He heals the father, sick in mind, no less than the son, in order to persuade us to give heed to Him, not by reason of His miracles, but of His teaching. For miracles are not for the faithful, but for the unbelieving and the grosser sort.

3. At that time then, owing to his emotion, the nobleman gave no great heed to the words, or to those only which related to his son, yet he would afterwards recollect what had been said, and draw from thence the greatest advantage. As indeed was the case.

But what can be the reason why in the case of the centurion He by a free offer undertook to come, while here though invited, He goes not? Because in the former case faith had been perfected, and therefore He

undertook to go, that we might learn the rightmindedness of the man; but here the nobleman was imperfect. When therefore he continually urged Him, saying, Come down, and knew not yet clearly that even when absent He could heal, He shows that even this was possible unto Him in order that this man might gain from Jesus not going, that knowledge which the centurion had of himself. And so when He says, Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe, His meaning is, You have not yet the right faith, but still feel towards Me as towards a Prophet. Therefore to reveal Himself and to show that he ought to have believed even without miracles, He said what He said also to Philip, Believest thou that the Father is in Me and I in the Father? Or if not, believe Me for the very works' sake. c. xiv. 10, 11

John 4:51-53

And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said to him, Your son lives; and himself believed, and his whole house.

Do you see how evident the miracle was? Not simply nor in a common way was the child freed from danger, but all at once, so that what took place was seen to be the consequence not of nature, but the working of Christ. For when he had reached the very gates of death, as his father showed by saying, Come down ere my child die; he was all at once freed from the disease. A fact which roused the servants also, for they perhaps came to meet their master, not only to bring him the good news, but also deeming that the coming of Jesus was now superfluous, (for they knew that their master had gone there,) and so they met him even in the way. The man released from his fear, thenceforth escaped into faith, being desirous to show that what had been done was the result of his journey, and thenceforth he is ambitious of appearing not to have exerted himself to no purpose; so he ascertained all things exactly, and himself believed and his whole house. For the evidence was after this unquestionable. For they who had not been present nor had heard Christ speak nor known the time, when they had heard from their master that such and such was the time, had incontrovertible demonstration of His power. Wherefore they also believed.

What now are we taught by these things? Not to wait for miracles, nor to seek pledges of the Power of God. I see many persons even now become more pious, when during the sufferings of a child or the sickness of a wife they enjoy any comfort, yet they ought even if they obtain it not, to persist just the same in giving thanks, in glorifying God. Because it is the part of right-minded servants, and of those who feel such affection and love as they ought for their Master, not only when pardoned, but also when scourged, to run to Him. For these also are effects of the tender care of God; Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges, it says, every son whom He receives. Hebrews 12:6 When therefore a man serves Him only in the season of ease, he gives proofs of no great love, and loves not Christ purely. And why speak I of health, or abundant riches, or poverty, or disease? Should thou hear of the fiery pit or of any other dreadful thing, not even so must thou cease from speaking good of your Master, but suffer and do all things because of your love for Him. For this is the part of right-minded servants and of an unswerving soul; and he who is disposed after this sort will easily endure the present, and obtain good things to come, and enjoy much confidence in the presence of God; which may it be that we all obtain through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be glory, now and ever, and world without end. Amen.

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