

In our Gospel lesson for today, we're given another beautiful example of Jesus' deep love for the ones He came to save, in His healing of the nobleman's son. We're given yet another demonstration of our Lord's powerful Word, a word that has the power to accomplish what it says, like no other word can. But in our text for today, we're also given a clear lesson about faith... faith in Jesus Christ as our God and Savior. And specifically, we see HOW it is that JESUS GROWS OUR FAITH IN HIM.

We begin in verse 46. **So [Jesus] came again to Cana in Galilee, where He had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to Him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.**

Our text begins with a certain nobleman, possibly an official in the court of King Herod, and this nobleman has a problem. We're told that **his son is ill... and at the point of death.** Now, we're not told exactly what his illness is, but we know that he's dying, and there's nothing that this man can do to save him. But still, this man has hope.

You see, he's heard of a man... a carpenter's son, named Jesus. Word of this Jesus of Nazareth has been spreading quickly these past few months. They say He can heal people of their sickness. That He can cleanse people of leprosy or demonic possession. Some even say He might be the promised Messiah. And if he could only get this Jesus to see his boy, there might be a chance that he too could be healed.

Word had it that Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, but now it sounds like He's returned to Galilee. What's more, He's just up the road in Cana. Now, his son is too sick to make the trip, but if he could go there and bring this Jesus back with him... there might be a chance.

The man in our story has faith. He's heard others speak of this Jesus... and he has faith in their words, that this man can help him. There's much on the line here, and he's moved by that faith to spend what could be the last few days with his dying son to travel some 20 miles, climbing 1,700 feet in elevation, on the chance that the Teacher might return with him and possibly heal his son. Reason would say this was a fool's errand. But he has faith – a beginning of faith, perhaps – but faith, nonetheless. And it's that faith that moves him to go.

But when he asks Jesus to come, our Lord doesn't agree to go, as He had done for others in the past. No, instead of giving the man exactly what he asked for, Jesus uses this as an opportunity to test the man and to grow his faith. **“So Jesus said to him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”**

Clearly, this man has faith that Jesus can heal his son, or he wouldn't have come this far to make his request. But our Lord is pointing out the weakness of his faith. This man has heard what Jesus is capable of, and now that he stands in His presence and can see Him with his own eyes, he is encouraged. But what if Jesus says "no"? Will he still trust that He can heal his son?

The nobleman believed that, if Jesus came back with him, He would be fully capable of healing his son. But with this hard rebuke, that faith is shaken. What if He won't come? His son would surely die! And so, like Peter, who cried out to Jesus as he sank in a wave, the man cries out in desperation, to the only one who can help him: **"Sir, come down before my child dies."**

And Jesus responds by answering his heart-felt prayer and strengthening his faith. **"Go; your son will live." And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.**

When the nobleman's weak faith in Christ was challenged, he turned to the Lord for help. And Jesus responded with His Word, to increase his belief. "My child, I don't need to come to your house to heal your son. I'm Jesus, the one through whom all things were spoken into existence. I hold all power and authority in heaven and on earth, including total power over sickness and death. And I tell you, **Go; your son will live.**"

And being Who He says, the very Second Person of the One, True God – this Word accomplished what He intended. The Holy Spirit used this Word to strengthen this man's faith. **He believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.**

[And] as he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.

As the man is returning to his son, trusting in the Word that Jesus had spoken to him, he meets some of his servants. They confirm for him what Jesus had said – **"your son is recovering. He will live."** And when they discuss the exact hour that he began to improve, he knew without a doubt that it was Jesus who healed him. His faith is confirmed.

What's more, this faith is an active faith. He shares with his family what has happened. The Good News that Jesus of Nazareth is who He says He is. He IS the very Son of God, Who has power over creation. He IS the Messiah, come from the Father to save mankind from his sins. **And he himself believed, and all his household** with him.

This man heard a word about Christ and was drawn to Him by faith. And then Jesus tested that faith, and then caused it to grow. And then that faith was confirmed, and it continued to grow. So too it is for us believers today, as JESUS is the one who GROWS OUR FAITH IN HIM.

Like the nobleman in our text, we hear a word about Christ and are drawn to Him. For, like that man, we too have a need that only Christ can meet. Since the Fall into sin, all of us are born sinful. And like the illness that plagued the official's son, our sin threatens to kill us as well, as we lie here, helpless in our sinful condition. The disease of sin separates us from our holy God, and – if we're not healed of it in time – we will certainly die eternally on account of our sin.

But we have hope. There is a man... a carpenter's son named Jesus, from Nazareth. And word has been spreading about Him for thousands of years. They say He can heal people of their sickness. That He can cleanse people of leprosy or demonic possession. And some even say He might be the promised Messiah. And they are right!

Jesus came to heal mankind of this disease of sin. He gave His very life on the Cross, as He suffered and died to make payment for that sin. And He rose again three days later to prove that He had defeated sin, that those who believe in Him would no longer have to fear sickness and death.

And when we hear this word, the Holy Spirit uses it to plant saving faith in our hearts through it. This is the beginning of faith, as we begin to believe these Words. Believe in Jesus.

But Jesus doesn't leave us there, with a weak, beginning of a faith. Like the nobleman in our text, He uses the trials and temptations that we face to strengthen our faith in Him.

When we're tempted to sin, His Word reminds us that **God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it** (1 Cor 10:13). This promise is true. But we are still sinners, saved by grace, and so we will continue to strive against our sinful Adam this side of heaven. And so, when we do fall into the temptation to sin, God comes to us again in His Word, encouraging us to confess that sin to Him and reminding us that we are forgiven, on account of the Cross.

When we're sick, He reminds us that **all things work for the good of those who love Him** (Romans 8), and that He will heal all of our sickness, whether in this life, or the next. And as we find ourselves at the end of this earthly life, He reminds us that **He is the resurrection and the life, and that whoever lives and believes in Him will never die** (John 11). Though this body may pass away, our soul will go to be with Him, awaiting the Resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting.

But more than just giving us promises, His is a living and active Word, that will not return to Him empty. It will accomplish all that He sent it for. And so, as we're reminded of these truths in His Word, the Holy Spirit uses them to strengthen our faith in these promises. In the finished work of our Savior. By this Word, our belief in Jesus grows.

And then, with each time that we see God carry us through our trials and temptations, our faith is confirmed and continues to grow. By the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, we trust God's Word more and more. We put our faith in His promises, as we've seen them come to pass in our lives, and in the lives of others.

That same Word is combined with bread and wine in the Holy Supper, to give us the very body and blood that was shed for us to earn us the forgiveness we so desperately needed. Our faith in Him is strengthened with each time that we return and receive this precious gift.

And then, like the nobleman, we share our faith with others. With family. Friends. Acquaintances. And the Holy Spirit uses that word about Jesus to plant saving faith in them, when and where He pleases.

From our text today, we can see how JESUS GROWS OUR FAITH IN HIM. How He uses His Word to draw us to Him by faith. How He uses trials and temptations to test our faith and cause it to grow. And how, as He confirms our faith, it continues to grow. May God continue to grow the faith within each of us, until we receive His promises in-full.