

#16 – John 4:46-54

Need: To understand that God uses hurt and pain to call those in need to Himself.

Aim: To see the contrast between those who know their need and those who need to have their need made known.

Title: “Knowing One’s Need”

Prop: In Jn. 4:46-54 we find a contrast between the woman at the well who knew she was in need and the nobleman who needed circumstances to recognize his need: **I. Nobleman’s Need - Jn. 4:46-49 God’s** and **II. God Response – Jn. 50-54.**

Intro: As a parent there is nothing more devastating than the loss of a child. Several years ago, while in seminary, I came dangerously close to losing my oldest son Caleb. I can’t remember the time frame but Caleb began to have some breathing issues and Cathy took him to the doctor. He diagnosed allergies and sent us to a local allergist/pediatrician. She took one listen to Caleb’s lungs and quickly signed an order for immediate hospitalization. He had double pneumonia and a dangerously high fever. Soon after admission he had an IV inserted in his arm for huge doses of anti-biotics and other necessary drugs to deal with the fever, infection and breathing issues. That first night I was supposed to work at the same hospital but I called in for a replacement as I lay in bed with Caleb, holding him in my arms as he slipped in and out of delirium, thrashing wildly about. Sometime that night the fever finally broke and after another couple of days we took him home.

As I lay in that bed I felt in my heart his life force slipping away and I poured out my heart to God and begged Him for the life of my son. When the fever broke I knew that God had heard my cry.

During such times God has my full attention to provide me with correction and direction towards the next step in my spiritual growth process. I have had two experiences with my son Joel as well. Each time I called out for deliverance and healing which has been answered, and then I was looking for the correction, confession and direction as once again God had my full attention.

At this juncture of chapter 4 we find a contrast as God used an ill son to bring a Nobleman, a man of royalty, wealth, power, respect and position to salvation, along with his entire household. Jesus used each person's immediate need to bring people to Himself. We find a stark contrast, as He used a fallen woman's immediate need to bring her to salvation. Then on the other end of the social scale, we today we find a man of noble birth and means; as Jesus used the man's son as the tool for salvation. God meets us at the point of our need. Most of us are somewhere in our life situation between these two examples of Jesus' power.

Jesus met the need of this woman at the point of her desperation and met the Nobleman on other end of the social and economic scale at his point of desperation; we being somewhere in between, Jesus is waiting to meet us at our point of need.

Prop: In Jn. 4:46-54 we find a contrast between the woman at the well who knew she was in need and the nobleman who needed adverse circumstances to recognize his need: I. Nobleman's Need - Jn. 4:46-49 and II. God's Response – Jn. 4:50-54.

Transition: Let's begin our study by looking at the Nobleman's need, beginning in verse 46.

I. Nobleman's Need – Jn. 4:46-49

A. Prologue For Healing (46-47)

1. Sequence of Events – All of the gospels were written with a specific purpose in mind. The Gospel of Luke is the most sequential of the Biblical accounts of the life of Jesus. With that thought in mind, this event of the Nobleman's son was placed at this juncture for the purpose of contrast. The events didn't necessarily coincide with a sequential time line. They were put back to back to make a point.

In chapter 4 we have Jesus meeting the need of individuals at both ends of the social scale.

The first was a prostitute and here in our account today, a man of noble birth, wealthy and powerful. Jesus used their needs as a tool for the purpose of salvation. With Jesus there are no barriers. He will meet all of us at the point of our need, no matter what we have done, the bad choices we have made nor the challenges we face; Jesus always offers forgiveness, purpose and meaning in this life. With Jesus' activity He brings salvation and balance and suddenly the challenges of this life take on a different perspective as He can turn mountains into mole hills.

2. Setting (46-47) – Beginning in verse 46, Jesus was in Galilee back in the town of Cana where He first began His ministry by turning the water into wine. While Jesus was there preaching, and most likely healing, a royal official came from Capernaum to see Jesus. The title of **“royal”** meant he was a man of nobility and position, with royal blood flowing through his veins. It also suggested that the man was a highly respected and wealthy individual.

The reason for his visit was that his son was sick. I imagine that he had spent a fortune on doctors and other medical professions with various treatments but all to no avail. He was desperate. God knew exactly how to bring this man to his knees. In this state of desperation he came to Jesus.

3. Word of Mouth (47) – In verse 47, this individual had heard that Jesus had left Judea and was in the region of Galilee which contained many little towns and villages. The Nobleman showed up where Jesus was ministering and made his way through the crowd, his position readily recognized. The crowd parted and he begged, pleaded and implored Jesus to drop everything and attend to his need. He didn't care about the others who had come to see Jesus and be made well. When he left his son, there was little hope for recovery; his son was about to die when he left to find Jesus. Verse 47 drips with emotion and passion, something that I have felt for my own sons. I understand the man's desperation. If given the option he would have exchanged his own life for the life of his son.

B. Jesus' Reaction (48-50)

1. Jesus' Irritation (48) – In verse 48, Jesus seemed somewhat irritated that people's belief in Him was generated only by what He did for them rather than responding to His words: **“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”**

There are different kinds of belief. Many don't believe in God at all. They are born, live and die and that is the end of it. Others believe in a god or some higher power. Some believe that Jesus was a good man and teacher.

By His dying on a cross, He proved to serve as an example of one willing to die for what they believed. Here people believed that Jesus was indeed something special. He could heal the sick, cause the lame to walk and the blind to see. So many of the individuals that came to see Jesus indeed had real physical needs, but it ended there. Many others came to see Him heal and work miracles. But His words of life fell on deaf ears. Jesus's words were relevant to the needs of people both then and now. But for the most part **“seeing was believing”** and that wasn't good enough for them. Jesus' words of life had little impact upon the masses that surrounded Him.

2. Persistence (49) – In the midst of this clamor, the Nobleman was persistent in his quest for Jesus to come with him back home to heal his son. He pleaded, he begged for Jesus to come.

Transition: The stage was set for Jesus to do something spectacular, far above what this man felt was possible in verses 50-54.

II. God's Response – Jn. 4:50-54

A. Words of Healing (50)

1. Desperate Need – The Nobleman was desperate. With all his wealth, position and power, he was powerless to help his son, so he threw himself at the feet of Jesus, begging Him to do something; at the very least come, touch him and all would be well.

It is amazing what things need to be stripped away for us to come to God. When all our resources are exhausted, nothing left suddenly God comes into the picture. The woman at the well needed change in her life and salvation from her sinful existence, something she thought was impossible. Jesus offered new life and after an attempt by her to change the subject, Jesus persisted and she was eternally changed.

Here the story took a new twist as Jesus not being with the dying young man, present spoke words of healing and over the course of a long distance, the boy was healed. God has no limitations as to what He can do in bringing others to Himself. God has the power to take the bad situations of life, many of our own choice and bring good out of bad. Multiple times over the years I have experienced that in my own as well as in many lives of people. What they thought was impossible God did. I am confident that God can do that for you as well.

2. He Lives (50) – Having heard his desperate need, Jesus merely spoke the words to this man: **“Go your son lives.”** Here was the kicker: The Nobleman wanted Jesus to come with him. Yet when Jesus spoke the words, he believed. He took God at His Word. I am sure he expected something else, but having received and believed the words, the promise of God, he started off again on his journey home.

B. God Always Keeps His Word (51-53a)

1. Blessed Encounter (51) – Part way home, the Nobleman met up with some of his servants. They had good news and set off immediately to meet him on the road to assure him that his son was still living. Not only living but healed.

2. Inquiry of Timing (52-53a) - Could this have been a coincidence? Had the doctors done something different and the child began to get better?

With my both my sons I have no doubt that God provided healing and gave the doctors the ability to pull them through. But nevertheless I give God the credit. When the doctors were done, He heard my cry and intervened.

The answer to the man's question left no doubt. It was the very same hour that Jesus spoke the words and the fever left the boy. The conclusion was obvious, when Jesus had spoken the words, "**Your son lives,**" the Nobleman's son was spared.

3. Real Belief (53) – In verse 53, the healing of this man's boy produced real faith, unlike those in verse 48. The miracle produced life-rendering and saving faith not only in this man, but in his entire household.

This story leaves a lot of questions. Why does God heal some and not others? Why did God spare my sons, yet two of my children died in the womb? Why also did also one of my grandchildren die in the womb?

Why did God take a grandson in less than a year of life? I prayed diligently and fervently for those who did not make it. I even offered to exchange my own life for the life of a grandson, but nevertheless I am still here and he is not. I have received divine healing as a young child, but in my present condition, I find no relief or healing. Given my early condition, the last 56 years of my life were a gift. Back to the original question: **“Why does God heal some and not others?”** That is why He is God and I am not. He has His reasons and I have the calm assurance that these children are in heaven, in the presence of God. It doesn't bring much comfort here, but rather a confident assurance that God is in control and always does what is right even if it doesn't always coincide with my desires and plans.

4. Editorial Note (54) – In the latter part of verse 54, John added an editorial note. This event took place very early on when He had come out of Judea into Galilee. Jesus had been ministering in Judea where He had preached and verified His words through healing people. But now Jesus had come back home had begun to perform signs and wonders for the home crowd.

But let's not lose sight of the point here. Jesus had taken personal time to speak to a lowly person in desperate need. This person had two strikes against her. She was a woman and a prostitute.

Just imagine! Jesus spoke to a woman although it was against social convention, and then spent quality time with her, a woman with a soiled reputation! She had made some really bad choices over the course of her young life and had paid a high price for her decisions. Suddenly she finds herself in the presence of God in human form and her life was changed forever. As a result of that encounter she went and told everyone she knew about what had happened. I am sure after the dust had settled, her life changed and she made some tough choices as a result of her faith.

Now in today's message we find a man on the other end of the social scale. He was of royal blood, wealthy and powerful. He had no perceivable need. He had a wife and family, everything else a person could want: he was living the "**Galilean Dream.**" Suddenly all those things didn't matter anymore; as everything was made meaningless when his son got sick. God allowed a specially designed circumstance to bring this man to his knees to recognize his own spiritual need. He responded in accordance to God's Word and he and his family were changed forever.

Maybe you are here today, facing insurmountable challenges which like tidal waves are rolling over your soul. In the midst of turmoil, with nowhere else to turn, God is calling.

A personal encounter with Jesus can give perspective, peace in the midst of the storm, a personal relationship with God, and answers to the questions of your heart and life. Jesus is calling to all of us to come to salvation. However if already salvation, He is still calling us to service, to change and grow in our relationship to God. Are there ongoing conditions on going which are calling for a change of lifestyle, even the very foundation from which we make our life choices? Jesus promises the power and ability to come into our lives and bring order out of chaos, victory out of defeat and life out of death.

The call therefore is twofold: **(1)** Trust Jesus as Lord and Savior and He will give you abundant life culminating with eternal life. He will take away your sin and shame. **(2)** The second call is for the believer, to move forward in our love for God, showing our gratitude through the way we serve others. Are we looking for the opportunities that God always gives us and will we respond accordingly?

“Knowing One’s Need – Jn. 4:46-54

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- Jesus uses each person’s immediate need to bring people to Himself.
- God meets us at the point of our need.

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1. Desperate Need
2. He Lives (50)

B. God Always Keeps His Word (51-53a)

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2. Inquiry of Timing (52-53a)
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