

Title: FROM CANA TO CAPERNAUM AND BACK, JOHN 4:46-54.
(Chatham, NJ; 01/17/10, AM) [D – Narrative Analysis with Twin-Point Outline]

Theme: Although the official set out on a medical mission on behalf of his son, he learned that faith transcends a desire for the miraculous.

Purpose: To recognize the false faith and pride in our desire to experience the miraculous.

Introduction:

1. An official came from Capernaum to Cana when he heard Jesus was there.
2. He came because of a medical emergency; his son was gravely ill.
3. He succeeded and in the process learned true faith.
4. His experience coupled with Jesus' challenge about signs provides us with insight into our own faith.

I. Looking for Signs? (Note the story in John 4:46-54.)

A. Jesus heals the son.

1. Jesus had arrived back at Cana where he had changed water to wine.
2. Word came to an official in Capernaum, 15 miles from Cana.
3. He sought healing for his son.
4. Jesus' statement to him seems abrupt, even callous.
5. But Jesus often exposes the true motives of people: John 6:26 (those who wanted food) & Mt. 19:21 (rich young ruler).
6. Yet the official presses on, and Jesus satisfies his desperate desire, 49-50.
7. In the end the healing evokes faith from all involved, 53.

B. Paul characterizes the Jews as those who seek signs.

1. 1 Corinthians 1:22 is not a complimentary comment on their expectation.
2. This conjures up the ghost of Elijah on Mt. Carmel.
3. Mt. Carmel is perhaps only another 15 miles west of Cana.
4. The story of Elijah's great victory over Baal on Mt. Carmel had a profound geographical impact on the people of this region: it happened in their backyard.
5. Places and buildings often are invested with meaning because of what happened in those places or buildings. (Note the Little Red Schoolhouse across the street.)
6. Because Mt. Carmel was the scene of a great experience of God, it had nurtured an expectation for more of such events.
7. Oddly enough when Elijah performed the great sign on Mt. Carmel, it still did not turn Israel away from their idolatry.
8. This may provide the key for the problem with signs.
9. In the Corinthian passage God's true wisdom is the cross, and by seeking a different kind of miraculous event, the Jews missed the big one.

II. Getting a Sign. (The other side of the sign coin.)

A. John makes important points about signs.

1. They bring about faith, John 20:30-31.
2. Hebrews 2:4 teaches their role in the scheme of promoting the Gospel.
3. In contrast with Jesus' statement to the official these come across as double-minded.

4. A closer examination reveals that Jesus used his works as a tool to produce faith, John 14:11, but blindness often kept them from seeing these for what they were.
 5. Some wanted even more.
 6. Their demands placed the burden of proof on God, and Jesus would not tolerate this for a moment.
 7. The epitome of blindness is when the Jewish leaders want to have Lazarus killed only because he was living proof of Jesus' power, John 12:10.
- B. The desire for a sign is fulfilled, Mt. 12:38-42.
1. An adulterous generation seeks a sign: something from God to prove the prophet's true nature.
 2. Jesus had already given them lots of them and they didn't believe.
 3. But now he offers one more: the sign of Jonah, the resurrection.
 4. Even that would not be enough for some people then, and it isn't enough for some people now.
 5. It is, however, God's most potent and important "sign."

Conclusion:

1. Beware of expecting too much of God, of putting him to the test, of demanding from him some experience that will satisfy your need for assurance.
2. Listen for the still, small voice. Sometimes experiences with God are happening right under your nose. Jesus was a voice that would not cry out in the streets, Isaiah 42:2.
3. Believe the signs that have been given: miracles, wonders, and the resurrection.
4. The Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection is the sign that God has given to the world to demonstrate his love and to bring about the redemption of mankind.
5. Look for and believe no other.