

**John 4:43-5:9 “Rest.”**  
**5/17/15**

**SEVEN SIGNS**

Last time I was up here, I spoke from John 2 where Jesus turned the water into wine. It was the first, of seven seven sign-miracles in the book of John. Today, I am continuing that series. If you are not aware. In the book of John, before Jesus dies, John gives us 7 different miracles that Jesus performed, and only seven.

1. Turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
2. Healing the official's son in Capernaum (4:46-54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
4. Feeding the 5000 (John 6:5-14)
5. Walking on water (John 6:16-24)
6. Healing the man born blind (John 9:1-7)
7. Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

And the point of these vignettes, is to help us believe. This is exactly what John will admit in 20:30:

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

These seven miracles are meant to help us believe. These signs show us, in different ways, and by different stories, who Jesus and what his salvation is like.

The first picture we had of Jesus and his ministry was turning water into wine at a wedding. And we said that was a signal to us that before following Jesus was about carrying crosses, and before it is about sacrifice, our faith is first about a feast. Jesus provides, in himself, the means to eternal wedding day joy.

So today, as we continue to look at who Jesus is, and what his salvation is like we turn to the second and third signs in the book of John. Let's read them together.

**(READ JOHN 4:44-5:9)**

**WE ARE ALL TIRED.**

David Foster Wallace was an important author, one of his most impressive works was a 1000+ monolith called *Infinite Jest*, which in college I did a 15 page research on. The reason I know it was over a thousands pages was because I actually never read one of them, but still managed to get a B on the paper. So the reason I am about to quote him is not because of my intense knowledge of his writings. Although I do enjoy what I have read of him. But because he gets to the heart of what I want us to see in these miracles. In his commencement address to Kenyon College, shortly before he committed suicide, he says this:

*Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough... Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you... Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as*

*smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is... they're unconscious. They are default settings.*

Foster Wallace points out something Scripture has known for a long time. That sin is enslaving. That we all live for something, and if that something isn't God, we are driven by it - to our exhaustion and despair. As Tim Keller puts it: we will overwork to achieve it, are fearful if its threatened, angry if it's blocked or despairing if its lost. And we are always tired.

**What I think these signs communicate is this: Before following Jesus is ever about our efforts, before following Jesus is ever about our work to be perfect, following Jesus is first about rest.**

## **JESUS GOES HOME**

Look with me then to verse forty-six where John opens with an attention grabber.

*So, he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. (John 4:46)*

John grabs our attention with the first word of 46. "So" or "Therefore." Apparently there was a reason for Jesus coming back to Galilee. And in fact Jesus was coming home, Galilee was his hometown. Normally, when we come home it's because we want to relax. We have had a hard day, week, or month working and we come home to crash, relax and rest. Jesus had just done hard ministry with the Samaritans - a group hated by the Jews for their race and religion. But, unlike what we expect, unlike us, Jesus doesn't come to home to rest. He comes home because it's hard. John 4:43-44:

*After the two days he departed for Galilee. (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his hometown.) (John 4:43-44 ESV)*

He goes home, because he knows he won't be honored. He goes home because people do not believe in him. Already we get a glimpse of who Jesus is, and what it means for salvation to be rest. If you are sitting here today and think that Jesus can't come to you until clean up, or if you think that being a Christian is primarily about trying really very hard to follow some rule. Even now, Jesus is trying to un-work that assumption. Jesus has done no miracle yet, and he is already communicating that his salvation is not based on your ability - either to believe or to do.

Let's not stop there, let's go deeper into these Galileans' faults. Jesus tells us why he isn't receiving the honor he deserves. After the official asks Jesus to come to his home, and heal his son, Jesus responds not with comforting words but an indictment against the people standing around. Saying:

*Unless you [plural] see signs and wonders you [plural] will not believe." (John 4:48)*

What does he mean? Apparently, Jesus had drummed up a following as a miracle-worker and someone impressive and the Galileans were eager for another show. Jesus was David Copperfield and Capernaum was Vegas. Jesus was calling them out for their hope in miracles, and not in him.

But again, isn't it fascinating that before a miracle is ever done we find that salvation is not about perfection. It's not about the Galileans being good enough, it's not about doing or believing or working enough. Even though Galilee is a mixed bag of unbelief, and misunderstanding Jesus goes home to a place where he knows his miracles will be misinterpreted, and under appreciated. He goes home because people will not believe. And it's only at this point we are introduced to an official whose son was at the point of death.

## **JESUS AND THE POLITICIAN**

This official was an important person, but perhaps not a very moral one. At that time, in Israel there was only one ruler whom you could have been an official of - Herod Antipas. A gross despot who married his brother's wife, and bartered the severed head of John the Baptist for some salacious dance that "pleased" him - by his wife's teenage daughter. As you can imagine, working closely with an incestuous murderer probably tells you a little bit about the guy.

So it's incredible that regardless of the crowd's miracle-hungry tenor, and despite this man's unscrupulous employment - Jesus still heals the man's son. Again we see the kind of savior Jesus is, and what his salvation is like. This man's healing is not based on his inherent goodness. **And it also tells us that no matter what type of "work" or "worship" that we are currently employed that will not be the reason Jesus overlooks us.**

Put aside this man's flaws for a moment, and notice something commendable about him - his desperation. In the same way that presidential candidates don't slum it with psychics, and palm readers for campaign advice and neither do royal officials who have access to the best medicine, doctors and care meet carpenter-turned homeless rabbis for medical advice. This man, doubtless has spent time, money, energy, and sleepless nights toiling, working, worrying trying to save his son - and nothing works. He comes to Jesus, knowing this is his last hope. As soon as Jesus says "Go your son is healed." This man turns around and goes home. He desperately wants his son better. But before you go off getting the idea that this man's perfect faith was what endeared Jesus to him.

Notice that even his desperation, is poisoned. Notice the presumptuous way he asks for Jesus' help. He asks Jesus to come to his home, to leave his current plans, and to heal his son under his auspices. Now, that might sound natural for a desperate man. But compare this man, to another desperate man in Matthew 8. There a Gentile asks Jesus to heal his servant. But instead of asking Jesus to come to his home, he says that he isn't worthy of Jesus' presence under his roof. Instead he asks for Jesus to just speak the words, and that would be enough. This Gentile in Matthew is humble, but also, I think, recognizes that Jesus is God, and is able to heal with just a word.

Our official has neither that kind of faith, nor that kind of humility. He assumes he is the worthy recipient of Jesus' healing, but he is also confused about who Jesus is - assuming that his physical presence was necessary to heal. So, the point is this: Jesus heals even without perfect faith. And when Jesus heals he doesn't merely heal. In the same way this miracle isn't merely a miracle. It's a sign pointing to a greater truth. This man's physical healing is meant to lead him to spiritual healing.

When Jesus' says "Your son is healed." This man had just enough confidence in Jesus' ability as a miracle-worker, and was just desperate enough to bank his hopes that this rabbi was really able to do what he said he was able to do. When he goes home, and finds out the his son is *really healed*. His iffy belief in Jesus' ability transforms into a solid belief in Jesus is God, and he leads his whole family to believe. In fact this man will become the prototype for how the Gospel is spread throughout the early church. He starts a pattern and paradigm that we see all throughout the book of Acts (10:2; 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8). That when the gospel is preached, whole households are saved.

To recap. Jesus comes to a place where he is not respected, deals with an official of an evil king, and despite a faith tinged with presumption, and misunderstanding. He heals this man's son, and then saves this man's family. Giving the man rest from his sleepless nights and rest from the sickness of his sin.

Jesus is showing us who he is, and what his salvation is like. He is showing us that before following Jesus is about being perfect, or working to become perfect. It is about rest. Resting in the fact that Jesus will do it all.

If you are not a Christian and the reason you have held back from coming to faith in Jesus is because you do not think you are good enough; or you think that since you have doubts you do not think your faith is perfect enough; or you think Christianity is primarily about becoming perfect... Allow yourself, to lay that objection aside. Jesus' love for you is not based on the perfection of your understanding, or the strength of your conviction, but the perfection and strength of Jesus to heal, and save you. **The official was unable to heal his son, so he rested in Jesus to do what he couldn't. In a similar way, you must trust Jesus to do what you cannot do, bring you close to God, save you from your sin, and transform your doubts into faith and sin into righteousness. That's the first sign.**

### **JESUS AND THE INGRATE**

Our second sign concerns an ungrateful old man by a pool near Jerusalem. He was paralyzed, and had been for 38 years. And for 38 years he, along with multitudes of others, had held out hope that this pool could heal him. Occasionally, and according to legend, the waters would be disturbed, and the first few to make it in would be healed. **And after 38 years of working to save himself, this man had never been healed.**

When Jesus arrives he surveys the crowd of hundreds, and then chooses this one man, and asks: "Do you want to be well?" First. Why? Why this one man, and not anyone else in this crowd? Why this man, and no one else? Because he would make the biggest impact for the kingdom? Because he had the greatest faith?

Well I think we get a clue from context. Jesus has come back to Galilee not because people believed in him, but precisely because they didn't. Jesus just healed a man despite his presumption and unscrupulous employment. So I think something similar is happening here. I think Jesus heals this man precisely because he doesn't believe, and wants to change that.

Look how he responds to Jesus question: "Do you want to be healed?". It's not a desperate: "Yes! Heal me! Please." It's not a humble: "If you are willing." It's almost bitter.

*Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, "Get up, take your bed, and walk." (John 5:7-8)*

"Sir, for 38 years no one has helped me, and I have never been first." John describes this man in pretty dour tones. I didn't read the rest of the story but this man is confronted by some religious authorities for carrying his mat - something that was forbidden by their rules. And in verse 11, when this man is confronted we don't get what we expect. We expect a man overwhelmed with joy at his healing. But instead of explaining the magnitude of his healing, and the graciousness of his benefactor. He blames Jesus for his rule breaking, drawing the religious authorities ire away from him. Having succeed the Jews ask for the name of this rogue Sabbath Breaker and we learn that the man never learned Jesus' name. How are you so radically healed, and never learn the name of the one who healed you. (John 5:13) And once he finds out Jesus' name, he finds the religious authorities and he makes sure to tell them. Exonerating himself for his law breaking, and throwing Jesus to men, he knows will persecute him. (John 5:15)

Whether this man was stupid, or sinister we may not know. But this clearly isn't a man who deserves salvation. This isn't someone any of us would really want to spend time with. This isn't a man of great faith, or of any any faith. And I think that's exactly the point. Jesus heals not because of who he, or what he had done but simply because he loves him. But there is more to Jesus' love than physical healing, just like in the first story Jesus is after his spiritual healing. In verse 14 we are told that Jesus comes back to this man, and says this:

*“See you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” (John 5:14 ESV)*

*What’s worse than 38 years of paralysis and false hope - judgement. Jesus will say this explicitly in 5:24*

*“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24 ESV)*

I started by saying that before following Jesus is ever about our efforts, before following Jesus is ever about our work to be perfect, following Jesus is first about rest. It’s about believing, but not just knowing - resting. Trusting that Jesus is able to heal you not only from your diseases, but also your sin. Something this man never did.

### **BITTER SLAVES**

But why is that? Why did this man never believe, why did he “Go on sinning?” - the thing Jesus warned him not to do. Think back for a moment to that quote by David Foster Wallace. He said that the intrinsic appeal of a divine-like being was that if we worship anything else it will eat us alive. I think that’s what we get a picture of with this man at the pool. A man eaten alive by his false worship.

For 38 years this man worked hard to save himself. Diligently, each day to be present for the water’s stirring - but it didn’t work. And unlike our first man who recognized his inability to save his son and in desperation turned to Jesus. This man does no such thing with his inability. Jesus saves him from his paralysis, but his physical salvation, doesn’t translate to anything more. He never rests in Jesus to save him from judgement.

I think ultimately the reason why, is because this man was worshiping his sickness. (Now that might be a little bit of speculation. But allow me to continue this man’s story as a parable.) When salvation didn’t seem possible. He noticed that his sickness actually gave him something that he wanted. Pity, and attention. He recognized that as long as he was sick, people would pay attention to him, and maybe throw a few coins. Or in other words he loved what his sin gave him more than he loved the idea of being saved from it. DFW called it out in us as well. When we love things other than God and if we don’t achieve those things we become angry, insecure, and bitter. We like this man blamed Jesus for his lawbreaking, blame God for our circumstances, and when asked if we want to be free from what we hold most dear wonder what will happen if we give up trying to get all these pleasures. The illicit sex, the rush of gossip, and that feeling of superiority when we follow the rules and other don’t.

We are worried if we were to truly worship God, and give up everything else give up our sin, give up our lifestyles, and give up our lusts. **Life would be somehow less, we would feel less, we would know less, have less, be less.** But the promise of the first sign, is that following Jesus is a feast of pleasure, and the promise of the second is that following Jesus is rest for weary souls who have tried all the sin, and all the attempts at self-salvation but still feel eaten alive.

Jesus offers rest from both the emptiness of our sinful pursuits and from our attempts to purchase our salvation by being good enough, and religious enough - which is just always exhausting. So let’s turn to perhaps the most important fact about this miracle - that it was done on the Sabbath.

### **WHY ON THE SABBATH?**

When Jesus heals on the Sabbath he is showing us the tenor, the kind and the type of salvation he is saving us to. His salvation is ultimately, not effort, not morality, not false hope in mythical pools - it is rest. And his rest is more sound than any weekend could even be. Because his rest doesn’t depend on how much work we got finished during the week, or the amount we could leave at the office.

We can rest, because Jesus has already done all the work necessary.

The first Sabbath is recorded in Genesis it says that God rested on the seventh day. He had already done the work necessary for a perfect world, one pre-installed with every deluxe planetary feature.

God worked to provide everything for human flourishing. Cold clean running water, plants to give shade, animals to enjoy, Mountains to climb and to conquer, fruit and vegetables to eat. And then, God then gave Adam a perfect wife. (A woman so beautiful that he literally sings when he sees her for the first time.) And the one command was to have as much sex and children as you can. And as if that wasn't enough work. God promised himself. The God who is love gives them himself. They would never feel alone, ashamed, confused, scared, or unloved, or tired. They had everything, and they had God.

**On that Sabbath, Jesus celebrated that it was finished.** His people could rest in what God had provided. In the garden, the Sabbath celebrated all the work had already been done, and all that was left, was rest.

But in this place of perfection humanity is told a lie. The lie promised that if we just disobey, we will be like god. If you look to, or worship something other than God we can know more, feel more, be happier and have more. Little did we know that this would eat us alive. And our lives would be marked by hardship and loss. And each Sabbath would no longer be a celebration of what we had, but of what we lost, and hoped would be true some other day. The Sabbath would be just one day in a week of work and toil and pain.

*“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, even when we hoped in mythic pools, even when we worshiped ourselves, made us alive together with Christ - by grace we were saved.”*

And just like in the beginning of the world. God worked once again. This time not to create but to restore. To save people from their sin and restore our relationship with God. But God knew that was something we could not do. Paralyzed men cannot move, and no matter how much money you have you cannot just cure diseases - and we cannot atone for the rebellion of the garden.

So instead of punishing us, he punished himself, offering Jesus as our substitute and our salvation. Jesus was accused, mocked, whipped, and beaten, executed, then forsaken for sins that were not his fault but ours. Absorbing the cost of treason and rebellion the way parents absorb the cost of their son's mistakes. And because of this final work. **Jesus would end his life crying “It is finished.”** The work to heal and to save has been done, and our rest is forever guaranteed, and will always be available. Not for one day at the end of a hard week, but each day and finally - forever.

*“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” (Hebrews 4:9)*

*And this is why Jesus will say*

*“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*  
*(Matthew 11:28-30 ESV)*

So.

If we are all tired. Will you rest in Jesus' work? Or will you exhaust yourself with your own?