

Sent: Thursday, December 04, 2014 11:56 AM

Subject: Tuesday Nite's MOB Session

Men--At our get-together Tuesday nite, we considered Jesus' "long-distance" healing of the "nobleman's son," as recorded in John 4:43-54. This was the third episode in a series of encounters Jesus had with a diverse group of people, which the Apostle John used in his gospel to establish his point that the message of Christ is for everyone who "believes"! Think John 3:16!

Three weeks ago, we looked at Jesus' witness to Nicodemus, the "high-up" Jewish religious authority who thought he had it all together, but was surprised to learn that he had to be "born again" (be "born from above"--spiritually), in order to "see the kingdom of God." Then, two weeks ago, there was that highly controversial conversation (especially if you were a Jew!) that Jesus had with the "lowly" Samaritan woman--the "woman at the well," who was an outcast even to other Samaritans! It was to her that Jesus revealed His true identity (as the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior!) and to whom he offered of "living water." And then, on Tuesday nite, we saw how Jesus dealt with a "certain royal official" (the nobleman) who likely served in the court of the notoriously wicked "king" Herod (the one responsible for the murder of John the Baptist!)-and who, realizing his desperate need, ended up placing his complete, and final, hope for his son's healing in the hands of Jesus!

Interestingly, none of these three episodes entailed the kind of miracles or "public spectacle" the crowds of people flocking to Jesus were seeking! In fact, Jesus seemed to go out of His way to avoid such displays in these instances, knowing the shallowness of their faith--in contrast to the "believing response" of the Samaritans in taking Him at His word! He had returned to Galilee and noted that "...a prophet has no honor in his own country." And a related account in the gospel of Matthew (13:53-58) indicates that Jesus didn't do many miracles there "because of their unbelief"! (All of which suggests how we may be limiting God's working even in our day, through our lack of faith!)

But John reports that Jesus did respond in a very special way to the "believing faith" of the nobleman! The nobleman actually demonstrated his faith in a step by step process that we can track. He first of all believed enough in what he heard about Jesus to travel 19 or so miles from Capernaum to Cana to see Him up close and personal. And, realizing his desperate need, he humbled himself, "coming as a beggar" and, John reports, "believed the words Jesus spoke to him"--as evidenced by "starting off" on his journey back home. His faith was confirmed and rewarded when he received the news of his son's healing on the way back, later realizing that the timing of his son's recovery was such that it could only be explained by the miraculous work of Jesus! And he obviously couldn't keep the story to himself--since John records that, as a result, his entire household came to faith in Christ! Makes you wonder too about the ultimate impact this might have had even in the court of Herod!

Well, our lesson raises some questions about what true faith is all about--and whether "seeing is believing," or "believing is seeing"--or whatever! As Kirk noted in his presentation, the Greek word for believing (*pisteuo*) is subject to various interpretations, depending on the context. The great "faith chapter" in the Bible, Hebrews 11, defines faith as "the substance (NASB uses the

term "assurance") of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"--and later says that "without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is (that He exists!) and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Remember how "doubting Thomas" (in John 20:24-29), after the resurrection of Christ, struggled with believing! He even said he wouldn't believe unless he saw the risen Christ "with the nail prints in his hands..." And then we see how Jesus so graciously appeared to him to establish and confirm his belief, while noting "how blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!" And that would include us!

Well, we got to add one more important thing about faith here--and that is its connection with the word of God--and, more specifically, the "message of Christ." Paul says in fact, in Romans 10, that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing the word of God." And He later indicates, in Ephesians 2:8-9, that even this thing of faith is not just something we conger up ourselves, but is actually a "gift of God"!

And so our lesson leaves us with a challenge, among other things, to gauge where we're at in our "faith journey"--but also to realize how important it is that we grow in our faith. Kind of like what we saw with the nobleman! Someday we'll have opportunity perhaps to check it out too from the perspective of the nobleman's son!

Well, on to Lesson #12, covering John 5:1-16, and a new phase--with an "Escalating Conflict!" Remember, that we won't be meeting next Tuesday, but will be resuming our study of this great book on December 16th, which will actually be our final meeting for 2014! And you'll want to go to the IBC web site to download the small group study guide!

Have a great couple of weeks, men!

Lowell Mininger