

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“NOT BY SIGHT”

For individual study or group discussion

DATE: March 22, 2026

SPEAKER: Wil/Brian

SERIES: The Gospel of John

PASSAGE: John 4:43–54

Family Dinner Table

The Wheelbarrow Test

In 1859, the famous tightrope walker Charles Blondin attempted the impossible: crossing Niagara Falls on a tightrope stretched 1,100 feet across raging water. A crowd of about 100,000 gathered to watch. Before crossing, Blondin asked, “Do you believe I can do it?” The crowd cheered, “We believe!” He crossed safely.

Next, he asked if they believed he could cross blindfolded. Again they shouted yes, and he did it. Then he asked if they believed he could push a wheelbarrow across the rope. The crowd enthusiastically agreed, and once again he succeeded.

Finally, Blondin asked, “Do you believe I could cross with a man in the wheelbarrow?” The crowd roared, “We believe!” But when he asked for a volunteer to climb in, the cheering stopped. No one stepped forward.⁴

The story illustrates the difference between wonder and faith. It’s easy to cheer from the crowd; it’s harder to stake your life on someone’s word.

In John 4:43–54, many people were amazed by Jesus’ miracles, but the Galilean official showed deeper faith. When Jesus Christ said his son would live, he believed and began the long walk home before seeing proof. True faith isn’t just excitement about signs, it’s trusting Jesus enough to step into the wheelbarrow.

- Compare the Galileans (v. 45) to the royal official (v.50). How does John distinguish between those who simply enjoy the “show” of Christianity and those who actually “step into the wheelbarrow” by trusting Jesus’ Word? (cf. Hebrews 11:1)

In John 4:43–54, we encounter the long-distance healing of a royal official’s son. It is one of only three healing accounts recorded in John, alongside the healing at Bethesda (5:1–18) and the man born blind (9). John carefully structures this passage to underscore the power of Jesus’ Word, recalling John 1:1, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” John presses his readers to consider the nature of true faith: It is to live, **not by sight**, but by the Word of God (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, and 2 Corinthians 5:7).

The danger of a surface-level interest in Jesus (vv. 43–45)

The Galileans “welcome” Jesus but John subtly exposes that their interest is driven more by the wonder of his works than the weight of his Word (v. 45). Their shallow reception serves as a warning that seeing isn’t always believing. W.E. Best explains the true purpose of Jesus’ signs: “*Christ did not come primarily to be a miracle worker. His miracles were credentials for His claim of Deity. Faith, which is the gift of God, does not need signs and wonders. Lame faith looks for crutches of miraculous signs, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah’ (Matthew 16:4). Here is the standard by which faith is measured.*”¹

- Read John 2:23–25, 5:43, and 12:37–43. Given the dangers of superficial belief, how can we guard against a faith that recognizes Jesus outwardly but resists him inwardly?
- In *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis suggests our problem isn’t that our desires are too strong, but that they are too weak. We settle for “*making mud pies in a slum*” because we can’t imagine the “*holiday at sea*” that Jesus offers. How does a surface-level interest in Jesus keep us from the life-giving relationship he gives?

The deeper trust that Jesus requires (vv. 46–50)

The royal official approaches Jesus in desperation, asking him “*to come and heal his son*” (v. 47). Yet Jesus does not act according to the man’s expectations. Instead, he simply says, “*Go; your son will live.*” (v. 50). Theologian Alfred Edersheim highlights the significance of this moment, explaining that Jesus is guiding the official to trust in the authority of his Word: “*What he intended to teach this man was, that he, who had life in himself, could restore life at a distance as easily as by his presence; by the word of his power as readily as by personal application.*”²

- Compare the royal official’s plea in John 4:49 with the Syrophenician woman’s persistence in Mark 7:24–30. When Jesus initially pushes back, why do you think they refuse to walk away? How does their refusal to give up reveal a trust that has moved beyond getting a miracle and toward a desperate dependence on Jesus himself?
- According to John 20:31, what is the primary purpose of Jesus’ signs in the Bible? Discuss how this sermon series in the Gospel of John has challenged you thus far to trust Jesus and to take him at his Word.

The transforming power of Jesus’ Word (vv. 51–54)

As the royal official returns home, he discovers that his son was healed at the exact moment Jesus spoke. His faith deepens into certainty, and it overflows into his household. John shows us that true faith is not static; it grows, deepens, and extends outward to others.

- Looking at both the Samaritan woman (vv. 28–30) and the royal official (vv. 51–54), how did their personal trust in Jesus’ Word become a bridge for others to believe?
- Tim Keller summarizes, “*Life-giving faith seeks Jesus for himself, not for his gifts and benefits.*”³ In what ways have you been seeking the advantages of Christianity without pursuing the Person of Christ? Meditate on Psalm 63 this week.

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¹ W.E. Best. *The Impeccable Christ*. 1971, Grand Rapids, MI. Sovereign Grace Publishers. 76

² Alfred Edersheim. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 1969, Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. 425

³⁻⁴ Tim Keller. *The Healing*. January 26, 2014, GospelinLife.com. <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-healing/>