

## The Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity, A✠D, 2008

**John 4:46-54** So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. <sup>47</sup> When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. <sup>48</sup> So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." <sup>49</sup> The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." <sup>50</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. <sup>51</sup> As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. <sup>52</sup> So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." <sup>53</sup> The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. <sup>54</sup> This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 When Jesus returned to Cana, certainly people remembered Him. And word about Him spread quickly. "The miracle worker, the one who gave us wine from the stone water jars, the one who does great signs and wonders, He has come back to Cana!" So the official from Capernaum made the 20 mile journey to Cana to see if he might get this Jesus to do a miracle for his dying son. He believes Jesus can do miracles, to be sure, or at least he hopes so. But Jesus is for this official as any other servant, a means to an end. When he has a need, Jesus is convenient. So he came and asked Jesus to come to his house to heal his son.

2 Is that how you treat Jesus, as well? As a miracle worker to be ordered around when you have need of Him and allowed to go His own way when you see no pressing need? Do you call on him only when you have an illness, a family crisis, an errand you could use some help with? Is Jesus just a means to an end, little more than a genie to be invoked with half-hearted prayers? Believing Jesus is a miracle worker will do you no good. Even the demons believe that and shudder. Repent.

3 Jesus gives this official a stinging rebuke. "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." But faith is not what can be seen or proved. No, faith is, according to the writer of Hebrews, the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Even if the official could have signs and wonders, he still would not believe. How many people witnessed the miracles of Jesus and still remained obstinately without faith? In fact, the signs and wonders Jesus performed were what drove the crowds to conspire to have Him crucified. But the official persisted, refusing to let Jesus have the final word. Where before St. John records the man asked Jesus to come to his house, now he's done asking. "Come down [to my house] before my child dies."

4 But Jesus will not. He will not be ordered around, no matter how much power or influence this official supposes to have. Instead Jesus answers with this terse response. "Go, your son lives." He puts on no

impressive show; He does not treat the man with gentle words; He does not preach at length until the man feels his heart strangely warmed. He speaks just a word to him. Go; your son lives.

5 The man should have responded in outrage at this disrespect. He should have laughed at the foolishness of what Jesus spoke. He should have been insulted that Jesus would not come to his house. Any of those would be a normal reaction. But what does St. John say the man did? He believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. He's no longer even "the official from Capernaum," just "the man." According to Martin Franzmann, the author of the hymn we just sang, Jesus sent him with only a word in his pocket. But what a word! The word of Jesus evoked repentance and faith in this hard-hearted man. The word that made wine from water now makes life from death, even in a town miles away. The son of the man received his health from the very moment of Jesus' word. The man believed and so made believers out of his entire household. What a word!

6 The word of Jesus is the word that cleaves darkness from light. The Word of God is the word with the power to create something from nothing, with the power to create the entire world in six short days. It is the eternal Word. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was God, and the Word was with God. By Him all things were created. And then the Word became flesh and dwelled on earth. Jesus is the Word of God, the eternal Second Person of the Holy Trinity. What a Word! The same word that pronounced "let there be light" commanded the dying boy to live.

7 The Word of God who took human flesh in the womb of His virgin Mother did more than signs and wonders. Signs and wonders would have been for Him to overthrow the soldiers who came to seize Him in the Garden. Sure, they fell down at His word, but He allowed Himself to be arrested. Signs and wonders would have been the way to demonstrate to Pilate and the crowd assembled that He is indeed the King of the Jews. Signs and wonders would have been for Him to call down angels to deliver Him from the cross. Signs and wonders would have been for Him to escape from the cross and destroy His captors in a powerful coup de force. But there, on the cross, the Divine Word of God, the Word through whom all things were created, the Word that cleaves light from dark, died.

8 But the Son lives. Not the son of the official. He was healed, but he would eventually die. But the Son who commanded His Mother, "Woman, behold your Son," He lives. Though He died, He rose. Your Son lives. Yes, *your* Son. He, the Son of God, is yours. He gives Himself to you in His Word.

9       What a word! He gives Himself to you in the water and word of Holy Baptism. It is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word (LSC). What a word! In the word of Holy Baptism, you died. Little Addison drowned to death in the waters of Holy Baptism. And the Word of God, Jesus Christ, took her sin and gave her His sinless life. She died and rose in those ordinary waters by the power of the Word of God.

10       What a word! The Son of God gives you Himself in Holy Absolution. The Word of God, through which everything was created, still creates. It creates a new reality. In the word of absolution, you were made a saint, a sinless child of God. At His Holy Supper, the powerful Word of God creates the presence of the true Body and Blood of Jesus where there was none before. And then, the Word made Flesh, Jesus, the Son who lives, gives you Himself. He gives you His Body and His Blood to eat and to drink. He gives you the very forgiveness of sins in this precious meal.

11       Cling to this Word. Jesus sends you on your way with His word in your pocket, in your heart, on your lips. Go in peace. The Son lives.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
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