Our text this morning illustrates the progression of faith w/i a soul, from shallow/superficial faith, to saving faith.
The text itself is John 4:43 to 54, but today we will examine only the first half of it—verses 43-49.
This is the story of a royal official who came to Jesus seeking help w/ a tragic situation in his life=>
His young son was dying.
Even hearing such a story can grip the heart of a parent.
One of the principles we see very clearly in this passage is that God sometimes uses trouble in a person’s life to cause him/her to turn toward the Lord.
It may be a financial problem, an illness, something that endangers their children, or any other crisis.
Whatever it is, God can use it to cause us to seek Him.
The father in our text is a nobleman (an official at the royal court).
He has a compelling love for his sick child.
Although he is not yet a believer in Jesus, he seems to have a kind/loving heart, & had won the loyalty/affection of his household servants.
They, witnessing the child’s sudden recovery, will set out to find their master & give him the good news ASAP.
The servants seem to have a genuine interest in him and his family.
This father’s heart is deeply wounded, by the knowledge that his beloved child is dying.
Our children have a way of wrapping themselves around our hearts too, like that.
The nobleman’s anxiety about his son drives him to Jesus, & there he pleads w/ our Lord to save the life of this youngster, who is so precious to his heart.
He is not the only man to ever come to God, for this reason. But at first, he isn’t even seeking salvation for his own soul. He simply has a wounded/broken heart, & is crying out to God w/ feelings of desperation, for his child’s life.
Ultimately, we’ll read in verse 53 that through this tragic episode, the nobleman will come to believe in X unto salvation (John) =&gt; “Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives’; and he himself believed, and his whole household.”

John’s whole Gospel is all about faith in Jesus that saves our souls.
In 20:31 he’ll write, “These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
Meanwhile, in Jn 1:12 we read that believers have the right to become children of God.
3:15-16=&gt; Through believing in Jesus X a person receives eternal life.
3:18=&gt; Believing in X prevents judgment (Jesus)=&gt; “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not
believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

7:38=> Those who believe in X receive the blessed H.S.
11:25=> Those who believe in X will never die.
12:46=> Believers will be delivered from spiritual darkness.
14:12=> Believers are spiritually empowered for service.

But most importantly, w/o a personal faith in Jesus X, our souls are not, & cannot be, saved.

Jn 8:24 (Jesus)=> “Unless you believe that I am He [the Son of God from heaven], you will die in your sins.”

But through faith in Jesus X, a soul is delivered from spiritual death/hell.

For any one of us who has never truly believed in Jesus unto the salvation of our souls, John’s Gospel is like a red flashing light, warning us that we must do so, or face God’s judgment.

In Jn 4:43-54, we find a progression, from faith in Jesus at the most shallow/rudimentary level, to true, saving faith.

But this morning we will consider only the first 3 steps in the progression of the nobleman’s faith=>

* Faith based on fame (Jesus’ fame/reputation)
* Faith based on his fatherhood (his fatherly love for his son)
* Faith based on his fear, for his son’s life.

* Faith Based on Jesus’ Fame (His public notoriety/reputation as a miracle-worker)
As we begin, we find that X had gained fame because of miracles He had performed in both Galilee/Jerusalem. Jewish people had come to believe in Him as a miracle-worker.

That would have been good, if it had led them on to realize He was also Messiah & man’s Savior—but they didn’t.

During the 2 days Jesus/His-disciples had spent in Samaria, the Samaritans recognized Him as X, the Savior of the world.

But unfortunately, it was a different story w/ the Jews of both Judea/Galilee.

They considered Jesus a miracle-worker, & they liked the benefits of having such a person among them.

But, unlike the Samaritans, they showed no interest in His being Messiah, God’s-Son, & man’s-Savior.

In fact, John prob. included this story w/ that of the Samaritans, to point out the contrast in their attitudes.

The Samaritans being so ready to believe.

The Jews being so resistant to believing.

[John 4:43-44]⇒ “After the two days [in Samaria] He went forth from there into Galilee. / For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.”

2 problems lie buried in the wording here⇒

* What country was Jesus’ “own country.”

I find commentator Don Carson’s answer most likely⇒

that Jesus’ “own country” was where His fellow Jews lived—Galilee/Judea;
That as opposed to Samaria where He had just spent 2 days in fruitful ministry).

* How do we explain the word “For” in verse 44?

John seems to be saying that Jesus went to Galilee, to minister among His own people there, “for” (because) that’s where He expected to receive no honor as a prophet.

I.e., He was purposely choosing this more difficult ministry for himself.

Bringing the Samaritans to a saving knowledge of Himself as the Savior/Messiah had been easy.

Getting His own people in Galilee to listen to His words as those of a prophet of God, would be difficult, because their familiarity w/ Him, had bred contempt in them.

So that’s where His ministry was needed most, esp. in light of the fact that God intended the gospel to be to the Jews first (His chosen people—Rom 1:16).

And so that’s where He was determined to go, even knowing how difficult it would be.

[Verses 45-46]=> “So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast [Passover]; for they themselves also went to the feast. / Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine.”

The Galileans received/welcomed Jesus as a miracle-worker.
They had attended the Passover feast in Jerusalem, & had been there when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

Many of them had also witnessed miracles that He had performed while in Jerusalem.

Word had also spread in Galilee about Jesus’ changing water into wine at Cana—the very Galilean town to which He now returned.

These people “believed” in Jesus, but they only believed in Him as a miracle-worker.

As faith goes, that is one of its lowest forms.

Jn 2 makes it clear that Jesus Himself didn’t put much stock in this kind of faith, nor this kind of “believer”:

“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs [miracles] which He was doing. / But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men” (23-24).

Their faith had to continually be propped up w/ more miracles.

Stop the miracles, and they stop believing.

As we move thru X’s Galilean ministry in John, we’ll see in ch. 6 that many of these low-level “believers” will abandon Him.

Their faith will prove to be faulty/false faith.

Jn 12 will sum-up the Galilean Jews’ failure to really believe in X with saving faith, saying=> “But though He had performed so many signs [miracles] before them, yet they were not believing in Him. / This was
to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ / For this reason they could not believe” (37-39).

All of this is a sad reminder of John’s initial statement in chapter 1=> “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (1:11).

However, even though these Galileans’ faith was disappointingly weak/ill-founded, it was better at this point than no faith at all.

In some cases, faith like that can serve as “starter faith,” around which more substantial faith can form, just as raindrops form around a tiny speck of dust.

It doesn’t save their souls, but it can become a step towards true faith, which does.

This explains the word “therefore” in verse 46=>

“Therefore [because the Galileans received Him due to the fame He had gained through working miracles in Cana/Jerusalem], He came again to Cana” (where He had performed His 1st miracle=> water to wine).

Jesus’ coming to Cana reminded the Galilean Jews once again that He had power to do miraculous deeds.

This rekindled/encouraged the limited faith in Him they had.
It was still like a very small fire, but Jesus gently blew on it by reminding them as He returned to Cana of the miracle He’d performed there.

**A person might not know that he needs to become born again.**

He might not know that Jesus gives light/life, or that He has the power to achieve such a spiritual miracle.

He might not be thinking in spiritual terms at all.

But when faced w/ trouble/problems in this world, & not being able to deal w/ them, he might realize he needs Jesus’ help.

If he has heard about Jesus, he might wonder if X could/would help him in his present difficulty.

On the basis of this chapter, I would say to him, “Bring your burden to Jesus, & ask Him to help you, out of His mercy.”

If you cannot yet come to Him for eternal spiritual blessings, come to Him for a temporal favor, and He will hear you.

If, at present, your prayer is only for everyday worldly things about which you feel great anxiety, go ahead, pray for them.

In Job 38, God asks a rhetorical question=› “*Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God And wander about without food?*” (38:41).

The answer is that God does, & you can be sure that raven is not asking for spiritual blessings.
If the Lord responds to the raven’s cry, why wouldn’t He respond to the cry of a man, made in His own image, even if he’s crying to God for commonplace things? If you have enough faith to pray such a prayer like that, pray it! You say, “But I’m not sure I’m really even a believer....” Pray it anyway, and see what happens. Maybe God will use that to help you believe in Him. That’s the kind of prayer a Galilean would have prayed. They had sought nothing more from Jesus than wine for a wedding, & He had answered their prayer. If you have even enough tiny/faulty faith to pray such a prayer, based on X’s fame & what you’ve heard about Him, let it lead you to bow before Him, seeking bigger/better things for your eternal soul.

* Faith Based on Fatherly Love

[Verse 46b]=> “And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.”

“A royal official” refers to someone who was officially attached to a king, being employed in the king’s court. The king this royal official served would have been Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. This royal-official/nobleman was prob. a Jew, since Jesus includes him w/ the Jews in the statement He makes in verse 48.
He lived at Capernaum, prob. about 16 miles from Cana where Jesus was staying (from Sedona to Cottonwood).

Hearing that Jesus had moved north from Judea to Cana, he left his invalid son at home, & went there to find/meet with Jesus.

[Verse 47]=> “When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and was imploring Him [begging Him] to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.”

**This was prob. an important man at Herod Antipas’ court,**

& **he was wealthy enough to have servants.**

But none of that mattered when his son got sick.

His fatherly heart, longing to see his son raised up, set all that aside, walked/rode the 16 miles to Cana, & sought out the miracle-worker he had heard was there.

Not only do we see great humility in the fact that he made the trip to Cana himself, rather than sending one of his servants to bring Jesus back to him in Capernaum, where his child lay sick in bed.

We see it even more clearly in the fact that he lowered himself and humbly begged this carpenter from Nathareth for His help.

The power of a parent’s love for his child can cause him to set aside every other consideration, & do whatever it takes to meet his child’s need.
A number of clues show us how faulty this man’s faith actually was.

1st, he assumed, that if Jesus, the miracle-worker, was going to heal his son, X would have to come to the nobleman’s house where the boy was lying in his bed. He knew the child himself would never survive a trip to Cana, and it didn’t even occur to him that Jesus’ power could reach from Cana to Capernaum & heal the boy sight unseen.

He thought, “If I can just get Jesus to enter the room where my child lies, all will be well.”

The 2nd faulty aspect of his faith, was that he thought if the child died before Jesus got there to him, even He could no longer be of help.

He thought Jesus had enough power to help sick people, but not dead people.

Many people today would put Jesus under similar constraints, w/ regard to His saving people’s souls. They think X can save cases that are easy—a person raised in a Xn home who attended Sunday school all his life; But not a drug addict, or a prostitute, or a gruff, hostile person who constantly uses profanity.

Some think themselves so wicked, they are beyond saving.
They should trust X’s omnipotent power to bring spiritually dead people to life, just as He raised Lazarus back to life physically.

They should learn to let the Lord save whoever He wills & to trusts that He can do so.

3\(^{rd}\), his “faith” was based on Jesus’ fame & public knowledge about Him that he had come across there in the royal court. I.e., all he knew about Jesus was His reputation.

He seems to have tracked Jesus’ movements from Cana, to Jerusalem/Judea, and now back to Cana.

He knew Jesus’ reputation as a performer of miracles, but had no real understanding of our Lord’s divine nature.

However, it was clear to him that Jesus had demonstrated His willingness to use His power to help others.

4\(^{th}\), the nobleman’s faith was contingent on X’s working miracles.

[Verse 48]=> “So Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.’”

Jesus objected, that this man’s faith had to be constantly bolstered by signs/wonders, because he didn’t simply believe that Jesus was the omnipotent Son of God, the Messiah.

X used very strong language—“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”

It’s emphatic=> will in no way, whatsoever, believe.

This statement is the key to the whole narrative, because it points out the main flaw in the nobleman’s faith.
It was the same flaw in that of all the Galileans=> They refused to believe in Jesus/His-message, apart from His miracles. And even then, they only believed Him to be some sort of miracle-worker.

5th, the nobleman’s faith in this miracle worker was based on the wishful thinking of a father’s love—he simply wanted & needed it to be true. In most situations, our wishing for something to be true does not make it true. His heart was open to Jesus’ being whoever He said He was. He had heard stories about what X had done for others, & he knew Jesus was his son’s only hope.

He determined to stand there before Him, refusing to be deterred, until his request for his child was granted; Or until X sent him packing. Even when Jesus’ first answer was not what he wanted to hear, his fatherly heart wouldn’t let him go/leave. So his wishful thinking was both a strength/weakness of his faith.

If those who understand little of X’s power/goodness, pray faulty prayers, it is excusable, & He treats it graciously. When a toddler begins to stand, no one finds fault w/ him for being a little wobbly.
Once he becomes steady on its feet, we then encourage him to walk/run, a/w/a/ stand—but until then, we don’t expect that of him.

The same is true w/ regard to the faith behind our prayers=>
No one expects the faith of an unbeliever or a spiritual newborn to match that of a mature saint.

In the nobleman’s case, fatherly love drove his faith, & caused him to travel to Cana in search of Jesus.

* If your faith is strong enough to lead you to X, & to pray earnestly as this humble father did, it is acceptable.
It doesn’t have to be a flawless/faultless prayer.
The nobleman’s wasn’t.
It just needs to be based on a sincere trust in Jesus, even if it’s only because you need/want what you’ve heard about Jesus, to be true.

* If your prayer causes you to seek the Lord wholeheartedly, it is a good/right prayer.

* If it drives you to humbly/sincerely pray for His mercy to save/cleanse your soul from sin, then yours is now a saving faith.

* **Faith Based on Fear**

The nobleman isn’t yet a true believer in Jesus, & his prayer isn’t yet the kind of prayer that would save his soul.
That won’t happen until we get to verse 53—next time.
But his faith is moving in that direction, & this is just a next step in the progressive growth of faith, taking place in his heart & leading up to saving faith.

Despite the fact that he’s not yet a believer, Jesus is going to answer his prayer, & save his son’s life.

As we come to verse 49, we can clearly hear the fear for his son in this nobleman’s pleading voice.

[Verse 49] (John)=> “The royal official said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies.’”

Overwhelmed with the dreaded thought of his son’s death, the nobleman pours out his heart, continuing to plead w/ Jesus to come to his house, & save the little boy’s life.

He neither knows/cares about X’s divine nature.

Nor does he care that Jesus has just rebuked him, lumping him in w/ all the faithless Jews of Galilee & saying=> “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”

He cares for only 1 thing=> his child’s life, which he fears, is quickly slipping away.

He knows how long it will take Jesus to walk from Cana to Capernaum, & he’s just hoping his son will hold on and live that long.

The nobleman still hasn’t shaken his misconception that Jesus must be present at Capernaum in order to save the boy.

But no matter how imperfect his faith, he tenaciously clings to Jesus as his only hope.
Rarely, would a nobleman like this have to suffer the indignity of having anyone rebuke him.

But Jesus has just rebuked him, & he doesn’t even flinch, he doesn’t object at all.

Nor did he argue the point that he a/w/a the Galilean people in general, didn’t need to see signs/wonders before they’d believe.

The only thing on his mind was that Jesus had the power to turn water into wine, right there in Cana, & He’d gained a reputation for working miracles in Jerusalem.

So Jesus was his only hope, & he wasn’t moving until Jesus agreed to come to Capernaum & save his son’s life.

His faith was full of faults, but it was at least a beginning toward true faith, & it was a driving force in his life right now.

The nobleman’s thoughts after X rebuked him for not believing w/o signs/wonders, might have been=>

“Lord, don’t think about the weakness of my faith right now. In fact, don’t think about me at all. Just heal my dear son, or he’ll die. He/I have no other hope, but You.”

John Bunyan came to this point in his own life, & so he wrote=>

“I was driven to such straits that I must of necessity go to Jesus. And if He had met me with a drawn sword in His hand, I would sooner have thrown myself upon the edge of His sword than have gone away from Him, for I knew Him to be my last hope.”
The nobleman’s faith was so limited, he was still asking Jesus to come down to Capernaum, but it was extremely intense faith, driven as it was by this fear of losing his son.

And you, my friend, if you are anxious/fearful, pray, pray again, cry out to the Lord, hold on to Him, and don’t let go or stop, until He gives you peace/rest.

He wants to bring you to the point in your life where you realize that He is all you have, & He is all you need.

**Does this mean that if you/I are full of fear when we pray, we’re guaranteed that Jesus will grant our requests?**

No, because getting an answer to prayer wasn’t what this was all about in the nobleman’s case—it was all about his faith.

He was in the early stages of its development, which is why his prayer was so faultly.

But Jesus was going to use his prayer to further develop that faith by answering it.

He had already learned enough, not to pray, “Lord, save my son because he’s a good boy,” or “because he’s of noble birth.”

He simply pled the urgency/extremity of his need, begging for mercy from the Lord=> “My son’s about to die!”

As we’ll see next time, Jesus will intervene to keep that from happening.

It’s a wonderful ending—don’t miss it!
Meanwhile, I hope this teaches each of us to base our plea on the greatness of God’s grace and our own spiritual need, as the nobleman did;

And as David did=> “For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great” (Psa 25:11).

If your heart is humble before X like that, if you pray based on the urgency of your need and the mercy of God, He will hear your prayer.
“A Progression of Faith” (Part 1)
August 4, 2013

Text: John 4:43-49

1. Our text this morning illustrates the progression of faith within a soul from shallow, superficial faith, to [14 saving] faith.

2. John’s Gospel is all about faith in Jesus that [12 saves] our souls.

In John 4:43-54 we find a progression from faith in Jesus at the most shallow, rudimentary level to true, saving faith; this morning we will consider only the first 3 steps…

* Faith Based on Jesus’ Fame

3. The Jews considered Jesus a miracle-worker; but unlike the Samaritans, they showed no interest in His being Messiah, God’s-Son and [12 man] Savior.

[John 4:43-44]

4. Getting His own people in Galilee to listen to His words as those of a prophet of God would be difficult because their [24 familiarity] with Him had bred contempt in them.

Rom 1:16

[Verses 45-46a]

5. These people “believed” in Jesus, but they only believed in Him as a miracle-worker; as faith goes, that is one of its [14 lowest] forms.


6. Faith like that doesn’t save souls, but it can become a step towards [10 true] faith, which does.

7. If at present your prayer is only for worldly things about which you feel great anxiety, go ahead, [10 pray] for them.

Job 38:41
* Faith Based on Fatherly Love

[Verse 46b]

[Verse 47]

A number of clues show us how faulty this man’s faith was…

8. First, he assumed that if Jesus was going to heal his son, He would have to come to the nobleman’s [12 house].

9. A second faulty aspect of his faith was that he believed, if the child died before Jesus got there to him, Christ could [6 no] longer be of help.

10. Third, his “faith” was based on Jesus’ [10 fame] and public knowledge about Him.

11. Fourth, the nobleman’s faith was contingent on Christ’s working [18 miracles].

[Verse 48]

12. Fifth, the nobleman’s faith was based on the wishful thinking of a father’s [10 love]—he just wanted it to be true.

* Faith Based on Fear

13. The nobleman isn’t yet a true believer in Jesus; this is just a next step in the progressive [14 growth] of faith in his heart.

[Verse 49]

14. His faith was full of faults, but it was at least a beginning toward [10 true] faith, and a driving force in his life.

15. The nobleman’s case was about his faith; Jesus was going to use his prayer to further [16 develop] that faith by answering it.

Psa 25:11