

Trinity 21
Jn. 4:46-54

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessings to you, dear ones. I rejoice to see you and be with you this morning and to meditate on so great a Gospel text appointed for us as the one we have today. The homily I've prepared for you this morning is a little more contemplative in nature, which I have to say, I think is fitting for St. John's Gospel. His is my favorite for many reasons. St. John packs such rich theology in so few words. And he brings us into the divine perspective that transcends a worldly perspective from below. John takes us to heaven and has us look at things from above.

To a worldly mind, the man in our text had it made. The man was a royal official—a man of success—one who had a noble title, prestige, and honor in the community. But Scripture shows us what all of that amounts to in the face of death. Death is no respecter of persons. death makes light of everything the world honors so highly.

Whatever worldly wealth the official had, whatever remedies and treatment plans had been prescribed by the physicians and all their expert advice put together were finally found to be ineffective in stopping his son from dying. Death had reduced it all to dust and ash.

Despite the authority the official had in Herod's court—the weight of his office, the political clout he wielded, and the power vested in him—despite all of these, death had rendered him impotent.

Death revealed his complete inadequacy to save his dying son. Death reduced the royal official to be a beggar. This is how he came before Jesus. In truth, it's how we all come before the Lord Jesus. We're all beggars in need of what only He can give.

To the world, what the royal official did is foolishness. To the world, the man acts shamefully. He abases himself and goes to beg this itinerant preacher for help.

But in truth, the man did the wisest thing he could possibly have done. He humbled himself before the Lord Jesus. And the royal official from Herod's court who became a beggar was permitted to come into the presence of the King of kings. The man was even granted to make a request of the incarnate Lord of heaven and earth—the One Who has power to silence the demons and in whose presence they suffer unbearable torment. But the official suffered no such fate.

To the world, the royal official stood to gain very little by going to plead for help from Jesus. But in truth, the man had everything to gain.

The man gave up any reliance he had on his own abilities, and the Lord Himself became his strength.

The royal official had given up his pride, and from the Lord Jesus, he received back his son. He certainly did. He commended his dying son into the hands of Jesus, and our Lord delivered him from the iron grip of death.

The man had let go of any hope he had in his worldly wealth but he gained the treasure which is worth more than all of heaven and earth—he gained the life-giving Word of Jesus, which will never fade or pass away.

The man became poor in spirit, but he gained the kingdom of heaven. And he began his pilgrimage to Jesus with nothing, but he returned with faith in our Lord's Word and eternal life for him and his whole household in the end.

Just like the jars that were filled with water transformed into wine in that same place, there in Cana, the royal official had been filled with faith in the Word of Jesus and the bitterness of his grief had been transformed into sweetness—the sweetness of the sure and certain hope that his son really would be restored and that he really would be reunited with him again in the land of the living. No longer did sorrow threaten to overcome him. It had given way and had been transformed so that peace and pure joy took its place.

Now I know what some of you may be thinking, dear ones. Pastor, that's all well and good, but what does it mean for my life? And that's a great question to ask yourself. What does all this mean for you?

When crisis comes, do you immediately call upon Jesus in prayer and do so without doubt that He hears your cry for help? Do you come to the Lord Jesus mostly as the last resort? Or is He for you the One you go to in the beginning of trouble and at the end and everywhere in between?

Search your hearts, dear ones, and be honest with yourself. If God has permitted something terrible to happen to you, or your spouse, your brother or sister, or your child, have you despaired of God's help altogether, or have you burned with anger at Him and been tempted to turn away just the same?

Dear ones, if you have seen this within yourself, if you've at times acted on these impulses, I would gently set before you the example of the royal official. Holy Scripture today teaches you how to deal with sorrow and affliction in a godly way—it shows you what to do with these things as a Christian. Bring them to Jesus and fall down at His feet. Entrust all that you are and all that you have into His divine care, and leave the ultimate outcome to Him. Whether He grants a measure of temporary restoration and relief, like He did for the royal official in our text, or if He bids you to wait patiently until He brings permanent restoration and relief in the Day of the Resurrection, dear ones, commend all things into to the nail-pierced hands of Him Who shed His blood for your forgiveness, the One Who is our life and Who brings life out of death.

Dear ones, I want to leave you today with some counsel and consolation from St. John Chrysostom, one of the most brilliant preachers the Church has ever known. And this applies to all of you who are grieving the loss of your spouse, a dear friend, your siblings, and especially your child, similar to the royal official in our text.

Here's what St. John Chrysostom says: he first advises not to let your grief become excessive, because we Christians do not grieve as those who have no hope. But instead when you feel you're being overwhelmed by sorrow because of the loss of your beloved, focus your attention and occupy your mind with their newfound faculties in heaven. Chrysostom writes, "[Their] lips shall speak better and [their] eyes see greater things, and [their] feet shall mount upon the clouds; [their] body...shall put on immortality and I shall receive [them] back [far] more glorious" than they were when they departed.

This is the hope we have, dear ones. This is the hope we have in Jesus. So it is and so it shall be.

And to Christ be all the glory into the ages of ages. Amen.