Sermon Title: A WISE MAN

Text: **John 4:46-53 -- 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. 47 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. 48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." 49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. 51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 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." 53 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**.

Introduction: Today is Father's Day, and just in case you are unaware, it was first celebrated fifty-two years ago in 1972, nearly six decades after **President Woodrow Wilson** made **Mother's Day** a national holiday. Of course, I hope that every man in this room feels loved and valued for all the sacrifices you've made, whether you have children of your own or not. But let's face it…being a father today is not an easy task. There is a lot of pressure on us men to provide for and protect our families, to raise our children to be godly, responsible adults, and to help each one learn how to work hard and show respect for others. I'm quite certain that a lot of fathers, at least on occasion, feel overwhelmed by it all. Perhaps some of us here today are struggling and even suffocating under all these responsibilities and hoping for some sort of breather sooner rather than later. Recently I came across a story about a pastor who was walking down a country lane when he saw a young boy struggling to load a good portion of cow manure back onto a cart after it had fallen off. "***You look hot, my son***," said the cleric. "***Why don't you rest a moment, and I'll shovel for a little while***." "***No thanks***," he said. "***My father wouldn't appreciate it***." "***Oh, don't be silly***," replied the minister. "***Everyone is entitled to a break. Come and have a drink of water***." Again, the young fellow protested that his father would be very upset. Finally, in exasperation, the Man of God said, "***Your father seems to be a very unreasonable man. Tell me where I can find him and I'll give him a talking to and set him straight***!" Looking relieved the young farmer replied, "***That would be a big help, sir. He's under that pile of manure***." If any father here at River Ridge is feeling a bit under the pile himself, or worse, even desperate about a particularly challenging family situation, I want to share with you a passage from Scripture and a few biblical principles that will hopefully lift you to a better place this morning. If

you have your Bibles, turn to the passage I read a few moments ago in **John 4**, beginning at **verse 46**.

Context: In Cana of Galilee Jesus performed the first miracle of His public ministry turning water into wine (**See John 2:1-11**). Remarkably, the people who witnessed it did not respond the way you and I might imagine. Instead of putting their faith in the Lord because of His undeniable, supernatural power (*as the disciples who were present did*), many of those who saw the miracle, just clamored for more of the same. Turn a page or two in your Bible and now here in **John 4**, we're back again in Cana of Galilee and introduced to a nobleman from Capernaum (***some sort of official attached to Herod's court***) who viewed Jesus not as the Messiah of God, but as a miracle worker whose services he needed. Perhaps this man or a friend of his had been present at the wedding a few weeks before and saw firsthand what Jesus could do. Now in desperation as his son lay dying, this fellow did the only thing he could think of. Having exhausted all the medical advice he'd likely been given, the official approached Christ looking for another miracle. ***As we consider the story, let's see what we can learn about what a wise man should do when his back is against the wall***.

When his back is against the wall, the wise man knows where to turn (**John 4:46-48 - And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. 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. So, Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe**). It doesn't take a prophet to understand the nobleman's motivation for seeking out Jesus. He was desperate. His son was sick and near death. Obviously, no one else had been able to do anything for the boy. (**Is there anyone of us who would not also have done the same thing**?) And so, he makes his request, relentlessly (***the word "asked" is in the perfect tense***), begging our Lord to come down to his home near the Sea of Galilee and heal his son. At this point, it is unclear to the man who Jesus really is. All he knows is that the Lord has already performed a miracle that was witnessed by many. Perhaps He can do another one and that's why the nobleman wants the Lord to follow him home. ***He is at a very different place in his journey to Christ than the centurion*** in **Luke 7:6-10** who already had enough faith to recognize that Jesus could just speak a word and his servant would be healed. In that situation, the Roman officer was **commended** for His belief. Here Jesus **reprimands** not only this man but the Galileans in general for seeking sensational miracles rather than the One who is able to perform them. "**Unless you people see signs and wonders**," says the Lord, "**you will not believe**." It is clear that Jesus recognized the man's faith needed to be drawn to a higher level than merely seeing in Him

the potential for another miracle. (***I suspect the same kind of need is what drives so many of us to pray today. We are hoping for another miracle***.) But at least this fellow had the sense to turn to the Lord in the first place, and Jesus, rather than reject him for his shallow faith, graciously rewarded him for it.

That's the thing about faith in Christ. You don't have to possess a lot of it to get the Lord's attention. Just a little bit of faith…the size of a mustard seed…is all it takes (**See Matthew 17:20**). For most people, this is pretty much the same starting point when it comes to putting our trust in Jesus. ***However tentative we might be at first, just taking a few steps toward Him is far better than not doing so at all***. Why? Because faith in the right object is faith well founded. A few years back, I jumped out of a perfectly good airplane. Doing so required some faith in the equipment and person to whom I was strapped. When I met the guy, he asked if it was my first jump. I told him it was. He laughed and said, "Me too!" Then he assured me that he had jumped more than ten thousand times. I didn't know that much about him. I don't remember his name. But what I did know was that he was not a novice. Imagine for a second how I would have felt on the plane ride up had he said to me, "***I am so scared!***" But that didn't happen because the man in charge had assured all of us that the person in whom we were about to put our faith was trustworthy. ***Listen…the nobleman didn't know much about Jesus, except that He was the best option for someone in need of a miracle and that was enough to motivate the man to turn to the Lord***. And like this desperate father, every man sitting here today needs to exhibit enough trust in Christ to turn to Him with our lives and the challenges we face. We may have no more faith than this official initially did, but in simply seeking out Jesus we will be well on our way to learning to trust in Him. **WHEN HIS BACK IS AGAINST THE WALL, OR AT ANY TIME AT ALL, THE WISE MAN KNOWS WHERE TO TURN**.

When his back is against the wall, the wise man knows what to pray (**John 4:49-50a -- 49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live"**). Prayer is simply talking to God about the things that matter in our lives, and that's what was happening in this story. The official sought out Jesus looking for help. And he was not about to be deterred by our Lord's assessment of his (***and his fellow Galileans***) shallow faith and so continued to pour out his heart begging, "**Sir, come down before my child dies**." ***His was not a complicated ask, but one that only Jesus could perform***. ***Throughout His earthly ministry people were always coming to Christ and seeking His divine touch and to my knowledge there is no record of Jesus denying even a single request when it was accompanied by real faith***. And this man had some faith!! Think about it for a moment. It makes no sense for him to

repeatedly ask Jesus if he did not believe it was within His power to do what he asked. **For example, none of my kids has ever come to me asking for a million dollars. Why? Because I don't have it to give to them. If they ask me, however, for some loving guidance, some gas money or a warm meal and place to stay, these are requests I can fulfill**. Now this fellow came to Jesus because he was hopeful that the Lord could bring healing to his son. Still when Jesus responded positively to the man saying, "**Go, your son will live,**" this response probably caught him a little off guard. ***After all, what the man had asked was that the Lord would come to his home and work the miracle there, not send him on his way in the hope that one had already been performed on his son's behalf***. **To take Jesus at His word in this situation would require even greater faith than the man had been able to muster in seeking out the Lord in the first place**.

How you ever thought about the role of faith in answered prayer? In **Matthew 9:28**, Jesus said to two blind men who asked for their sight, "**Do you believe that I'm able to do this**?" They responded, "**Yes, Lord**," and as a result they were healed. In **Mark 5:36**, the Lord exhorted a ruler of the synagogue who had requested healing for his daughter to ***believe*** that He could raise the little girl from the dead. He did, and Jesus delivered on His word again. In **Mark 9** an evil spirit caused a young boy to try to injure and destroy himself. Again, Jesus said, "**Everything is possible for him who believes**." The boy's father professed his meager faith and his son was delivered. Finally, in **Matthew 21:22** Jesus told His disciples, "**If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer**." That's the thing about prayer. When we put our trust in the good, perfect and acceptable will of God, we can make our request with confidence knowing that He will always do anything that is for our good (**Matthew 7:11 -- If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him**)**.** So, here's an application for us dads. ***When we're troubled by something going on in our families, we need to come to the Lord in faith and believe that He will not only hear but answer our prayers***. **Remember:** if a problem is big enough to worry about, it is big enough to pray about. So even if we don't feel like we have enough faith, Jesus seems to honor those who have just enough faith to ask Him. (**Summary: When his back is against the wall, the wise man knows where to turn, what to pray and…**)

When the wise man's back is against the wall, he knows who to follow **(John 4:50b-53 -- The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 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." 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). Knowing that the man's faith was enough to see the answer to his request, but not enough to save him, Jesus did not agree to go with the man, but instead issued a test. The nobleman was told to go home because Jesus had already fulfilled His request and healed the man's son. With no way to confirm this, our Lord's instructions had to be obeyed in order for the man to see the healing that had already taken place. ***In doing it this way, Jesus was taking him to a newer and higher level of faith***. When the fellow did what he was told to do, he discovered along the way that his son was well having been healed at the exact time that Jesus said. Note the final and best outcome of this story. "**He himself believed, and all his household**." The man and his family saw in Jesus something far more important than simply a miracle worker. They came to believe that He was the promised Messiah, the One who would deliver the people of God from bondage to sin and death and as a result they inherited life, eternal and abundant! From that time on, they understood their true purpose for being on this earth – ***to know the Lord personally and glorify Him consistently***.

We're told that this was **the second sign** that Christ performed according to John's Gospel. Each one was given by our Lord to lead people to believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and, in so doing, to have life in His name (**John 20:30-31 -- Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name**). So where does this leave us dads today? If you aspire to be a wise man that knows ***where to turn***, ***what to pray*** and ***who to follow***, then the following must be true of you:

- ***First, you must turn to Christ.*** The Bible says of Jesus … **there is no other name under heaven by which a person can be saved**. He is the source of power, life, joy, strength, peace, and more. There is nothing in this world that is more important than our relationship with Him, not our families, our careers, or even our own lives. Men, seek the Lord daily so that He is always the first person you turn to in times of trouble.
- ***Second, you must pray to Christ.*** Too many men today see little power in prayer. We tend to want to take care of our responsibilities all by ourselves. The belief that prayer to the Lord means very little is a great lie from the Evil One. Our children are entrusted to our care so that we can raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. We will never have a better opportunity to make a disciple of Christ than the one afforded us in our children. But this

means that we must pray for our children (*or in some cases grandchildren*) and ask God to make them into servants of the Lord whose impact will far exceed that which we're having for the Kingdom.

- ***Third, you must obey Christ.*** This is where the "doing" comes into play. We turn to Christ, pray to Him and when He tells us what to do, we set out to accomplish His will. That is often when we see His answers to our prayers most clearly. And, by the way, this is how a man can leave a holy legacy for his family by showing his family the importance of constantly turning to Christ, praying to Christ and obeying Christ.

Conclusion: Men, I pray that you have been inspired to take some steps to be a man of faith who puts his hope and trust in Christ. I promise this will make you a better husband to your wife and a better dad to your children. Don't be like the man who, after hearing his pastor preach on bringing up his children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, told his ten-year-old son that he'd decided they needed to spend time studying the Bible together. However, for one reason or another, he never got around to it. Finally, one day in exasperation, the little boy told his father this riddle, "***Dad, if three frogs were sitting on a limb that hung over a pool, and one frog decided to jump off into the pool, how many frogs would be left on the limb***?" The dad replied, "***Two***." "***No***," the son replied. "***There were three frogs and one decided to jump, how many were left***?" The dad said, "***Oh, I get it, if one decided to jump, the others would too. So, there were none left***." The boy said, "***Wrong again, dad."*** Finally, the father conceded that he was stumped. ***"I give up. What is the right answer?" "Dad, the right answer is three. You see the one frog only DECIDED to jump, but he never did***." Oh God -- keep us from being like that man! May we take our responsibility as the spiritual shepherds of our families seriously and ***model for them*** how good life can be for those who turn to Christ, pray to Christ and follow Christ.