

Reflection for the Week: Healing

Read John 4: 43 – end

The royal official *begs* Jesus to heal his child. We read in other places that the leper *begged* Jesus to heal him. A leader of the synagogue *kneels* before Jesus to ask him to restore his daughter to life. The royal official and the leader of the synagogue have most likely had access to the best medical care of the day but nothing has worked and they are in their hour of separate need. The leper has nowhere else to turn. They share one thing in common – all have faith in Jesus' ability to heal.

John's portrayal of Jesus tells us that Jesus does not want to be seen as a wonder worker, but as someone who is pointing to the truth of God. Signs and wonder are all very well, but it is what they point towards and result in that counts. For the official in John 4, the only thing that matters is that God's power in Jesus can save his child. The child is healed at the hour Jesus spoke into the situation. The father and his household come to *believe* after this, 'the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.'

There is verse in psalm 51 that summarises the spiritual state of the leper, the official and the synagogue leader. It is this:

'The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.' (Psalm 51: 17).

It is when need and open-heartedness collide that we can best receive God's healing love. Naked honesty and the admission that we have no power to act in certain situations can open us up to receive *grace upon grace*. The official does not try to engage Jesus in a doctrinal polemic designed to make Jesus 'do' a sign. He just comes before Jesus seeking the help that only Jesus can give. Jesus, in turn, doesn't require a full confession of faith and the right level of theological understanding before he heals the man's son: 'Go; your son will live.'

Here is the uncomplicated, unconditional love of God in action. It does not require the sacrifices of yet more pious words, lit candles or religious officialdom.

Lent is a time to stand in naked honesty before God and to open our hearts to his love.