

Sermon for November 9th, 2025
TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS
Genesis 1:1-2:3

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. **3** And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” **7** And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. **8** And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. **16** And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. **17** And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, **18** to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” **21** So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **22** And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” **23** And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. **25** And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” **29** And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. **31** And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Psalm 8

1 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
9 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Ephesians 6:10-20

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **11** Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. **12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. **13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. **14** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. **16** In all

circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; **17** and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, **19** and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

John 4:46-54

46 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. **54** This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

Our text for meditation this Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Our Lord Jesus goes to Cana for this healing. Truly, this must have been the only thing He was there for: He goes to Samaria and speaks with the woman at the well, then He goes to Cana and heals the official's child, and then heads to Jerusalem. St. John reminds us that Cana was the place where He gave us the first official “sign” miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding, and the last verse of the passage emphasizes this as the *second* sign. So our Lord wants us to pay attention to the miracle itself and the *message* that He gives us before He accomplishes the healing.

So what exactly is our Lord saying with His words and actions here? He goes to Capernaum, speaks with the official, heals the official's son, and leaves. If we were reading this in Matthew or Mark or Luke's Gospels, we would not bat an eye at it; each of these three, called together the “Synoptic” Gospels,¹ includes plenty of Christ's miracles that happen over the course of His ministry. But St. John wrote about comparatively few of them, because he assumes that we have read the Synoptics already. Every one of the “sign” miracles then is something with a special *point* he wants to show us from Jesus's time here on earth.

Signs and Faith

So what is so important here? The official's son is dying. Our Lord responds to this information by telling the man and everyone around him, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” Plenty of Christ's miracles were accompanied by messages He gave, but this makes for quite a short sermon! What did Jesus mean by this? Was it a statement of contempt? If we read these words aloud,

¹ Synoptic meaning “seeing the whole together.” Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels on account of their similarities. St. John's Gospel includes the things that the other Gospel writers left out.

we might well conclude that our Lord was grumpy. After all, if you got sick and went to the doctor, you would think the doctor was angry with you if he only answered you with a single prickly comment!

But is Christ truly expressing contempt? Is He saying “you despicable, hard-hearted fools, I can only get through to you people if you see supernatural things, like jingling keys in front of a baby?” Nothing of the sort, thankfully. The text shows us that what Jesus says is simply fact; when the man saw that his son had been healed, he and his whole household believed. The intention of His statement is more to *teach* the official than to condemn. It is so that after he believes, he will see that Christ was the One who provided him faith through the miracle. And the disciples – both the Apostles and us – are to see this and learn from it as well.

The Bound Will

There is nothing special about the people of Galilee or the official with his sick son. They are not the only ones who require miraculous intervention to be brought to faith. We are *all* like that, my friends. Original sin, that is our sinful nature, keeps us from voluntarily seeking the true God and appealing to Him for salvation. No nonbeliever wakes up one morning, gets his coffee and says of his own volition “you know what? I think I’ll become a Christian today.” No one who lives in the darkness of sin, being led around by the devil, makes the free choice to believe. Certainly, they make *other* free choices, but their nature is too corrupted by wickedness to make the first move.

This is what our Lord is getting at. In order for someone to believe in Him, God makes the first move. He makes the offer to bring about faith, all we can choose is whether to receive it or resist what He is trying to do. He presents Himself through these signs and wonders, offers to change our hearts and renew our spirits, to make us *different* than we once were; if we accept it, He saves us by bringing us to true faith.

How do signs work?

So when it comes to conversion, to becoming saved, we are exactly like the official at Cana. We need to see signs and wonders or else we shall not believe. But what does Jesus mean by signs? Does He only mean miraculous wonders, like a child being healed of a deadly sickness? Yes, but insofar as the sign has to do with the Word. One does not have to be present to see that the sign has taken place. St. John records that the official's entire family believed. But they believed *after* the healing had taken place, and especially after discussing the matter! The official himself believed before he saw that his son was healed. It was not the healing itself, but the Word concerning the One who healed. As St. Paul says, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.”²

You may be wondering to yourself, “this is all well and good. The official and his family believed after the Word accompanied the sign. Well we have the Word, pastor. Where is the sign? Which sign do we believe?” And I am glad you asked. The sign is this, that a Man died for your sins and rose again from the dead. The Resurrection is that sign and miracle by which all men who hear of it may be brought to faith. We may not have been there at the empty tomb, and we may not have seen His Ascension into Heaven, but like the official of Cana's household – many of whom were not there when the boy was healed – we hear the *Word* concerning this most important sign, we see the *effects* concerning it, and we rejoice to receive the faith as well.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.