**Church of the Lutheran Confession's**

# Ministry By Mail

*"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17*

## 23rd Sunday after Trinity

Volume 67, Number 48

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### Scripture Readings

1 Timothy 1:3-12; John 5:19-30

### Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941)

#23| #355 | #409 | #46

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### Prayer of the Day

*Lord Jesus Christ, by Your death and resurrection You have turned our hour of death into the hour of life. Strengthen our faith in Your life-giving Word, that through every trial we may trust Your promises and finally enter the joy of life everlasting; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

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### Sermon Text

(John 4:46-54 NKJ) "So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47 When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. 48 Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." 49 The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!" 50 Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. 51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" 52 Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the

fever left him." 53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. 54 This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee."

## Theme

**It Is the Hour of Life**

Dearly Beloved Fellow Believers,

The word “hour” is used in several different ways. It can mean a specific time of day. That’s the way it’s used in our text, when the father asked his servants at what hour his son had recovered from his illness. That was a significant bit of information, for it was the very same time of day that Jesus had said to the nobleman, “Your son lives.”

But the fact that Jesus was able to heal this child of his illness and bring him back from the brink of death makes us think of another use of the word “hour”: a period of time characterized by some particular thing. We speak of an hour of suffering, an hour of trial, or the hour of death. It’s used for positive things too: the hour of triumph, for example. An act of bravery or valor may be called someone’s finest hour. We also find this use of the word “hour” in the Gospels. The evangelists refer to the time of Jesus’ passion and death as “His hour” (John 7:30; 8:20). Jesus spoke of it when He said, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified” (John 12:23).

So we may say that Jesus, by healing the nobleman’s son, turned the hour of death into the hour of life for the child. And we are also right to say that Jesus’ life and work—His passion, death, and resurrection—constituted the hour of life for a world that lay in the hour of death because of sin.

This, then, is the lesson of this miracle in the Gospel of John: because of Jesus, it is the hour of life in the world. He came to bring life into this dying world, which He did when He defeated the power of death by taking away the world’s sin. Here He exhibits that power by dismissing death with a word.

It Is the Hour of Life

—Those who look for signs and wonders do not see it.

It is the hour of life; we are living in a blessed hour of grace through the completed work of salvation accomplished by God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. Yet there are many who don’t see it. Here in our text, Jesus tells us one reason they don’t see it. It’s because they are looking for something else.

Jesus says this of the people who were present when the nobleman came to Him: “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” This statement is addressed to the nobleman, which might seem to us like a strange response to the heartfelt plea of a father for his dying son. But Jesus is far from

indifferent to this father's situation and petition, as we see from the way the account ends. Jesus doesn't send him away disappointed and crushed but grants the father what he had asked. Yet even this father, in anguish over the life of his son, needed to understand that in his encounter with Jesus, there was more at issue for him than his current concern, urgent and pressing as that was. That father needed to see his own great need as a sinner and understand that Jesus had come not just to give temporary relief from illnesses and temporary reprieves from death. He had come as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world by sacrificing His holy life, shedding His holy blood, and giving His sinless body into death on the cross. Those who were looking for signs and wonders would not see this.

What Jesus said to the nobleman was addressed to everyone who was there, as we have said, and the context of this miracle shows us why. The verses that lead up to the account of this miraculous healing tell us that Jesus had just come back to Galilee after having been in Jerusalem for the Passover. Many of the people of Galilee were unwilling to receive Jesus as their Savior. His experience at the synagogue in Nazareth illustrates this: the people became so enraged at Him that they tried to seize Him and throw Him off a cliff. Jesus Himself testified that "a prophet has no honor in his own country" (John 4:44). Yet when He returned from Jerusalem, the Galileans did receive Him. Why? Because they too had been to the Passover and had seen the works that Jesus had done there. Now they were excited to see Him. But they still didn't accept Him as the promised Christ who had come to cleanse them of their sins and reconcile them to God. They hadn't come to see their need for such a Savior.

This mistaken way of looking at Jesus is still with us today. People can think of Him as someone who is supposed to supply what they feel is missing from their lives and fix what is broken in their lives. They don't see that, because of sin and the fallen state of this world, not everything broken can be fixed in this life, and not everything that has been lost can be retrieved. Jesus wants us to recognize and confess our own brokenness, our own sinfulness, our own guilt before God, and the sentence of death that we deserve. This is the brokenness that Jesus came to repair; this is the lost life that He came to restore to us.

—Only those who believe Jesus' word see it.

The nobleman in our text did come to know these things; he did come to believe in Jesus as the promised Christ who came to give life through the remission of sins. He wasn't put off by Jesus' words of rebuke but continued pleading for Him to come down to his house before his son died. Jesus answered the man's plea, but not at all in the way that he had expected or hoped. Jesus didn't go to his house; He simply said, "Go your way; your son lives." That gracious word coming from the mouth of Jesus worked faith in the nobleman. He "believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way." He believed and acted on that faith by doing as Jesus had said. He headed for

home, confident that what Jesus had said was true: his son was no longer dying but living.

And then Jesus gave him a wonderful confirmation of what he had already believed. After the boy's sudden recovery, the nobleman's servants didn't wait for him to return home; they set out to meet him and bring him the happy news. "Your son lives!" they told him when they met him. It was then that it occurred to the man to ask the exact time the change in the boy's condition had come, and he learned that it had come at the same hour that Jesus had said to him, "Your son lives." Notice that the servants didn't say that the boy had begun to recover at that time, but that the fever had left him. He had experienced a recovery that was sudden and complete.

At that, we are told that the man believed. He had believed Jesus' word; now he believed in Jesus as the Christ, the promised Savior. And not only the nobleman himself but his whole household believed in Jesus.

So the hour when Jesus spoke His life-giving word put an end to the hour of death. The hour of death was transformed into the hour of life.

That hour has not passed. We are still living in the hour of life today, for Jesus has "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). This He did when He gave His life for us and rose from the dead. By faith in Jesus, we have passed from death to life. And the life that He has given us overshadows everything else in our daily lives and puts it into perspective. We still pass through hours of trial and hours of suffering, and we will yet pass through the hour of our death. But none of those things can take away the life that we have in Christ, with all that it means. Through faith in Christ, we have peace with God in the forgiveness of sins. We have access to Him in prayer for every need. We have the assurance that we are children in God's own family, who live in a state of grace and die in peace with the certain hope of eternal life. Amen.

**Pastor Em. John Klatt**

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