

Introduction

- A passage that has made me ask questions!

Top and bottom

- Son of a royal official on one hand
- Someone who had been an invalid for 38 years - bottom of the pile - on the other
 - strikingly similar to Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman!
 - Jesus heals anyone, just as he offers new life to anyone

The Basis of Faith

- Question in these two incidents also of what basis people have for placing their faith in Jesus
 - is it because of the miracles?
 - the "member of the royal household" did indeed, quite genuinely, come to faith - see v.53
- Does Jesus look out at our society and say, "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." (4:48)
 - cf unless you get that car seen to, its never going to work properly
 - which is not necessarily a negative statement!
- Jesus is more concerned that we come to faith than that we come to faith "properly"
 - isn't that just salvation by works in another form?
 - if you are "up to" seeing Jesus without miracle then you can join the club?

Two Stages

- Encounter Jesus - go away, discover more, reflect more, have chance to go a step deeper:
 - for royal official, came to Jesus, was told his child would live, but came to a deeper faith when realised it had actually taken place
 - for invalid: Jesus healed him, he walked, but Jewish authorities questioned Jesus' right to heal on the Sabbath, questioned the guy... and later he had another encounter with Jesus (v.5:14) implication of Jesus' words is that he needs to take a step of faith, not in Jesus as healer but in Jesus as Saviour
- Reflection of process that many people go through in their journey to faith:
 - explain Engels scale...
 - -10 is complete atheist, aggressively so
 - +10 is the apostle Paul
 - 0 is the point of conversion
 - 1-3 might be the early stages of Christian growth and understanding, starting to comprehend the basics of the faith and putting them into practise
 - -1 just before come to faith, believe in God, that Jesus is his Son, that sin is a problem, just coming to believe and place trust in fact that his death on the cross and resurrection offers the only solution
 - much of our evangelistic endeavour is around the -1 to -3 stages - Alpha, Start!, etc courses
- Jesus recognises it can take a while:
 - sometimes uses questions to draw people along that path
 - at other times - as here - it is his direct intervention in people's lives to draw them along; healing, comfort, words of knowledge/word in season...

Conclusion

- *The whole question of authority, challenge to the Sabbath thing that starts in John 5:9ff we'll come to next week*

