

## 'What Time ?'

*John 4:43*

*The official in the story may have been Chusa,  
steward to Herod the Tetrarch,  
whose wife was a follower of Jesus*

'What time did you say ?'

Putting the boy down, Chusa turned to his wife. The child ran away across the yard to chase the goats which had ventured in.

'The seventh hour,' she replied. 'Just look at him. You wouldn't believe he was at death's door this time yesterday. It was quite sudden. Like a miracle. One moment he was lying there, the next he was bright-eyed and wanting to get up. Just as though he'd wakened from a long sleep.'

'It *was* a miracle !' Chusa stared at her, a dazed look in his eyes. 'The seventh hour ! It was the seventh hour when Jesus told me to go home and Benjamin would be well !'

'You mean he wouldn't come, but he healed him from over in Cana!

'I really don't know, but, it *was* at the seventh hour when he spoke to me'

'If he can do that, what they say about him must be true. He really does have the power of God with him,' It was Miriam's turn to be amazed as the truth sank in. 'But why doesn't he do more of it ? Why does he bother to travel around ? Why not just stay in one place and work miracles for people all over ?'

'I don't think that's what he wants,' said Chusa thoughtfully.

'Not want to see people made well ? But, he's a healer !'

'Well, yes, he wants people to be well, but I don't think he considers that the most important thing.'

'It was the most important thing in this household up to yesterday,' Miriam reminded him.

Chusa sat down on the couch, which just hours ago had been Benjamin's sick bed. He drew Miriam to sit beside him. 'Let me tell you what happened yesterday, and maybe you'll see what he means.' Chusa sat for a moment trying to assemble his thoughts. 'It all seemed so right when I went to Cana. Jesus was there. Then Herod wanted me to go there to sort out that lost consignment of figs. It seemed to me that

God's hand was in it. I found Jesus straight away. It was a quiet time at the seventh hour and I spoke to him as soon as I arrived. He recognised me by you. 'It's Miriam's husband,' he said.'

'Well, I have been to listen to him a few times,' Miriam reminded him.

'I felt a bit like a beggar in front of him,' Chusa went on. 'But Benjamin was so ill I would have done anything. I hated being so far away when he was like that, but you know the Tetrarch wouldn't let me stay. I had to get help for Benjamin. However, when I asked he more or less refused to come, and it seemed to me, he accused me being a miracle -seeker.'

'That's not fair,' Miriam commiserated. 'Benjamin was desperately ill. It was only natural for you to want him healed.'

'Anyway, I begged him again. Then he simply said he wasn't coming, but if I went home I would find Benjamin well.! And that was it. He was busy with others after that. What could I do? I had to believe it. But what if it wasn't true. I kept thinking, what if I got home and found him ill...or worse?'

I had planned to make the return journey today, but after what Jesus said I decided to start out as soon as I could. It took ages to sort out the compensation for the figs. I still set out though. I couldn't get home quick enough. I made it as far as Magdala by nightfall, and then came on round the lake after first light this morning. I can tell you, I didn't sleep at all last night.'

Miriam was about to say how tired he must be, when Chusa turned to her. 'But it was a night I shall never forget! I was alone with my thoughts. I felt so niggled by Jesus saying I was only interested in miracles. It didn't really seem like him. Then I thought, perhaps he could be right. What else did he want me to do? The more I thought the more I had the idea that Jesus was still speaking to me - in my mind. Then I began to see what he meant. Did I really want him to work a miracle. What if it wasn't right? What if God didn't want Benjamin to get better?'

Chusa was conscious of the shiver which passed over Miriam, and reached for her hand. 'I know. But if.... What about us?'

'Unable to sleep, I went outside and watched the moon rise over the Merom Mountains. As the light grew it was like the truth growing in my mind. I began to see what Jesus meant. He wasn't just concerned about Benjamin. Miriam, he was caring about me - you - all of us. Most important for him was that I should believe him. That's why he said 'Go home.. and you will find the boy well. I not only had to believe his words - I had to prove I believed.'