

“Do You Want To Be Healed?” – John 5:1-18

As 2020 begins, I would ask you, what do you want this new year? What do you desire? New Year’s resolutions can easily become devolutions. In our passage this morning, we meet a man who is very sick, and Jesus asks him a question: “Do you want to be healed?” This is a curious question to ask a sick man. But what about you? What area in your life needs healing? Jesus, the only one who can heal, asks us the same question today, “Do you want to be healed?”

What is the setting of our passage? “After this” (5:1) – Earlier in John, we see Jesus interacting deeply with all kinds of people – (in 3) the very religious Nicodemus, (in 4) a Samaritan woman at a well, and right before chapter 5, an official whose son Jesus heals from a long distance. Some time has passed, and, as John’s gospel unfolds, open hatred and persecution of Jesus is growing.

This morning, we will witness Jesus’ interactions with a man who has been very sick for a very long time. We will see how **Jesus is the Healer of long-term sicknesses, the Hound of Heaven who pursues us, and the Son of God who has the power to do both of these things.** These are our three points. Let’s begin by seeing how Jesus is the Healer of long-term maladies.

I. John, Healer of Long-Term Maladies (1-9a)

John begins by painting a picture in vv. 1-3 – a very sad picture with a lot of very sick people. *There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* We are not told which Jewish festival, but we know that Jesus is there.

Then we are told about a pool *called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades* – columns supporting some sort of roof offering shelter from the elements.

And who takes shelter here? (v. 3) *A multitude of invalids – blind, lame, and paralyzed.* The word “invalids” literally means “without strength, weak, sick” – the people there were beyond the help of any earthly doctor, their muscles shriveled and withered for lack of use. [Does that describe you?]

Why were they lying there? For one, shelter. But there was something more – your Bibles might not include verse 4, which tells of an angel stirring the waters so that the first one in would be healed – why not included? It was likely not in the original manuscripts and so it is not considered Scripture.

But you can imply from verse 7 that the people there believed the water had healing effects. It could be natural (a warm spring with spa-like healing properties) or supernatural (angel). Point is – a place where hurting people went to find relief.

[Where are the pools of Bethesda today? Places where broken people congregate to find healing. Maybe not withered legs, but withered lives. Maybe not paralyzed physically but emotionally and spiritually. Stuck in cycles of addiction and hopelessness. In my experience, you don't have to go far. Danielle and I have found a pool of Bethesda where we live – our apartment building – we're getting to know our neighbors, and the more we do, see the physical, spiritual, emotional brokenness – not just in them, but in ourselves.]

And in verse 6, we learn that Jesus is there at the pool.

Think about that: when Jesus attends this festival in Jerusalem, where does he go? To the broken, hurting, hopeless, and overlooked. [What does that mean for us as his followers? Where is your pool of Bethesda?]

In verse 5, John tells of one man *who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years* v. 6 *When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time....[very long time!]* You may have a physical ailment that has lasted 38 years or more that you long to be healed from. But others of you may have long-term emotional or spiritual difficulties. Lingering needs and hurts, paralyzed relationships, withered hopes.¹

¹ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, p. 94.

[for me, a longing to be liked – appetite for applause from people – keeps me from loving people courageously and well because I’m fighting the temptation to take from them instead of to give freely]

- Jesus singles this long-suffering man out – we are not told why – and asks him a strange question: *Do you want to be healed?* Strange because this man had been an invalid for 38 years – why would he not want to be healed?

Why did Jesus ask this? – still a mystery to me, but at least two reasons:

1. To prepare this man for his world to be rocked – it’s like Jesus is asking him, “Do you want your entire life to change?”
There’s a saying, “A beggar loses a good living by being cured.”²
Being cured means new responsibilities and no excuses. For 38 years, he learned the invalid lifestyle – what would living whole look like? Without that addiction? Without that broken relationship? Without severe depression and anxiety?
2. To give him an opportunity to feel and express his need.

And he does by his answer (v. 7), which is also strange: *Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up...* He answers Jesus with a complaint that says, in effect, “I’ve tried everything and I can’t do this myself. I need help!”

Then in vv. 8-9, we see something shocking: Jesus heals him. He takes up his bed and walks away. A gift of grace. Totally underserved. Jesus loving the unlovely. Jesus sees him. Jesus asks him a question. Jesus heals him. Why?

Is this not a picture of the gospel? [Like Jacob, brother of Esau. Malachi 1: “I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.” Why was Jacob the one God chose and made in the line of the Messiah? Not because of anything he had done – simply God’s lavish grace.]

² Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, p. 95.

We see Jesus seeking this man out. Why? There is nothing in the man – just as there was nothing in us – that says, “Choose me.” It is God’s sovereign grace.

We see God’s grace in the way Jesus continues to seek this man out:

II. **Jesus, Hound of Heaven (9b-14)**

The situation is not looking good – the foreboding phrase (v. 9) *Now that day was a Sabbath* sets up a new scene and vv. 10-13 describe it:

The Jewish leaders are mad because it’s a Sabbath. They want to find whoever healed the man and told him to carry his mat because carrying things was against their Sabbath regulations. But the healed man didn’t know who healed him because Jesus had slipped away. But not for long.

v. 14: *Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”*

Jesus **found** him. Beautiful word! He went into the open with enemies all around and found this man. He takes divine initiative to seek out, find, and warn him. Newton’s “I once was lost but now am found.”

WHY take this risk? To care for his soul. Gives him a warning in the form of two commands:

1. *See, you are well!* – Odd – don’t you think this man would’ve known he was well? Of course, but Jesus is saying something deeper – Remember where you were. 38 years of misery, ended. Brothers and sisters, where were you before Jesus found you? Remember this gift of grace. Treasure it.

[John Newton did – “Amazing Grace” – autobiography – “wretch” – I once was lost, but now I’m found]

2. *Sin no more* – does this sound stern/harsh/intense to you? If not, it should. Hear Jesus’ words – *sin. no. more*.

- a) Jesus pinpoints this man's biggest problem – SIN – not his physical condition but his spiritual condition. Sin is your and my biggest problem too. *The wages of sin is death.*
- b) Jesus warning this man and you and I of the seriousness of sin. Notice the reason Jesus gives - *that nothing worse may happen to you*. Jesus connects the man's sickness with his sin. (It's not always the case that physical suffering is a direct result of our sin – John 9:3 – but acc. to Scripture, sometimes there is a direct link.)³ What would be worse than 38 years of misery on earth? 38 years of misery in hell. – I believe Jesus is implying that unless this man repents of his sin, this is his destination – not to live a sinless life – but a life of habitual repentance of sin.
- c) Jesus has a purposeful order in his commands. First, behold this gift of grace. Then, sin no more.
 [Like Israel – Ten Commandments (Ex 20) start like this: *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.* First, they needed to remember how God rescued them from painful bondage in Egypt. This gave them motivation for holy living as his treasured people – to have no other gods than him.
 Paul reminds the Corinthians (6:20) – *You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*
First, behold the grace of God. Then by the Spirit of God, put sin to death for the glory of God.

Jesus searched for and found this man because he needed to tell him this. We are not told whether this man indeed follows Jesus, but what about you?

How could Jesus be both the Healer of long-term problems and the Hound of Heaven who finds us?

³ | Cor. 11:30; Acts 5:1-11

III. Son of God (15-18)

After he is found by Jesus, the healed man tells the Jews that Jesus is the one who healed him. In v. 16, we're told that the Jewish leaders were furious because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Jesus' answer in v. 17 is profound: *'My Father is working until now, and I am working.'*

This may not sound very profound, but the murderous reaction of the Jews in v. 18 shows how radical of a statement this is: *This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

To fully get this, we need to peek into the heads of these Jewish religious leaders for a second. Going back to Genesis 2, the common teaching on the Sabbath in that day was that God worked for 6 days and rested on the seventh. But what did his rest look like? On the seventh day, if God had done nothing, all of his creation would have disintegrated. Things would have fallen apart without God upholding them, sustaining them, orchestrating every minute movement of the smallest spider to the splashing of the most enormous whale. The "rabbis agreed that God continually upheld the universe, yet without breaking the Sabbath."⁴

Now think back on Jesus' claim – *My Father is working until now, and I am working*. Jesus is claiming nothing less than divinity. That it's ok for him to work on the Sabbath because he's only doing what his Father is doing. He's basically saying, "My Father and I are engaged in the same task."⁵

And calling God My Father – he's claiming to be the Son of God. The Jews would have been absolutely stunned.

⁴ Andreas Kostenberger, *ESV Study Bible*, p. 2031.

⁵ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John*, p. 196.

As we close, I want you to hear this truth from Jesus:
My Father is working until now, and I am working.

JESUS IS WORKING. Now. This morning.

He is working to bring healing to more than the physical maladies that plague us, although we have certainly seen his healing hand at work in our church – Isaiah Thielman, Shiloh Sciacca, and Ruthie Armstrong...

Jesus is working to bring healing to the spiritual, emotional, relational maladies, even the ones perhaps that have haunted your steps for decades. I have seen him at work healing broken relationships in my family even this past week.

Jesus is working as the hound of heaven to search out and find you. To find me. To tell us, “*See, you are well! Sin no more.*” He’ll not tire or give up the chase.

Jesus is working to transform withered sinners into worshipping saints.

If you feel that Jesus has been chasing you, I invite you to stop running and see the wonders he will work in your life.

One day soon, we will sing with John Newton:

“Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav’d a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.”