

"EVERYBODY IN THE POOL!"

John 5:1-18

INTRO:

If you have your Bibles...we are in John chapter 5, Jesus heals a disabled man....over the past few weeks we have seen Jesus interact with and interrupt the lives of various people. He had a conversation with a Jewish religious leader - Nicodemus. He went through Samaria and met with an unnamed woman, and eventually a whole town! Last week he, by the power of his word, healed the son of a royal official. **Jesus truly cares for all people!!! No one loves like Jesus!**

MAIN:

5 After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**2** By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. **3** Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed. **5** One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. **6** When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.” **8** “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk.” **9** Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk. Now that day was the Sabbath, **10** and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat.” **11** He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

12 “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’?” they asked. **13** But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the

crowd that was there. **14** After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.”**15** The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. **16** Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. **17** Jesus responded to them, “**My Father is still working, and I am working also.**” **18** This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.”

Jesus is back in Jerusalem during one of the many festivals that the Jews celebrated....we are not sure what one specifically and we are told what one...John sets the scene; “By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. **3** Within these lay a large number of the disabled—blind, lame, and paralyzed.”

In Aramaic called Bethesda. “Bethesda” means “house of mercy,” a fitting term given the desperate state of the people lying there. Two pools are separated from each other by a partition. The pool complex likely contained the five roofed colonnades (i.e. **covered walkways; a “colonnade” is a row of columns**). Each pool was trapezoidal in shape, and the overall length of the two pools (north to south) was about 318 feet. The smaller pool to the north was about 197 feet wide on its northern side and the larger southern pool was about 250 feet wide on its southern side.

Check verse 4...The statement in the esv footnote about an angel of the Lord stirring the water and the first person who stepped in being healed is found in some early manuscripts, but not the earliest. Apparently there was a lot of popular mythology about this pool. Even if this verse was not in the original,

however, it shows that there was a well-known popular hope that this particular pool was the place where God would heal individuals.

Think about if Lake Erie held healing properties, when the water is stirred, how many people would be on the beach???? For any ailment?!?!?! Covid? Hair loss? This pool had around it anyone who was in need of healing and help.

“5 One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to get well?” Sounds like a ridiculous question...right?!

It is not as ridiculous a question as you might think. For 38 years he has lived life a certain way. To come out of that “way of life” isn’t easy. I remember years ago working at Matthew House and talking with a social worker here in Fort Erie from Ontario Works (welfare). She talked about the crisis of not just affordable housing BUT also appropriate housing - sure you can find an apartment to rent for an affordable price....BUT no human being should ever live there.

She did go on to mention that affordability and appropriate housing aren’t the only issues when it comes to finding housing. She said that some people....just prefer to live on the system, adjusting to the handouts....and never wanting to change. **So Jesus’ question....makes a lot of sense....because IF you want to get well...it will change everything!**

7 “Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.” Not only is this man a long-term invalid, but although he lies right next to the (apparent) medicine, he has no one who will actually take him the few steps

further to receive it. **Who brought him to this pool? Why did they not stay to take him into the water? The man appears to be not just paralysed physically, but also to be relationally paralysed—alone and friendless.**

8 “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk.” **9** Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.” What he was unable to do for 38 years....he was now doing! **Story could end here...**

“Now that day was the Sabbath, **10** and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat.” The Jewish leaders had learned the lesson of the Babylonian exile almost too well. Having been sent into exile for breaking the Sabbath, worshiping idols, and not following God’s law, they now were determined to make sure that not the slightest infraction was committed in case it led to a fresh exile (Leviticus 26:43). **They had become the Sabbath police.** Rules that were intended to guard against working on a Sabbath, to proclaim the higher meaning of the Sabbath as a rest in God (itself to be fulfilled in Jesus—see Matthew 12:8), had become oppressive burdens that prevented a man from being healed on a Sabbath! So they accosted the man for breaking a stipulation related to “work” on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:29), which they no doubt viewed as potentially extremely serious (Numbers 15:32), and likely to provoke a repeat of Israel’s history that they were determined to avoid (Jeremiah 17:21-22).

They were putting their merely human religious tradition above genuine love and compassion for others. It was Jesus, not these Jews, who was truly obeying the Scriptures. **Jesus now has crossed a boundary, he stepped over the line!**

11 He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” **12** “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’?” they asked. **13** But the man

who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.”

Despite the fact that Jesus had performed many miracles in Jerusalem on his previous visit and many had believed in him, this man knew nothing about him; he did not even know his name.

“14 After this, **Jesus found him in the temple** and said to him, “**See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.**”

We know that physical ailments/sickness/disease are not always the direct result of particular sins (though all suffering and pain in this world is the general result of the fallen nature of this world). Jesus will make this principle clear in 9:3, where he says clearly that the blind man’s healing is necessary, not because the blind man has sinned, nor because his parents have sinned, but because the situation is part of God’s design to show his glory by healing him. **Not all difficulty or suffering is the direct result of an individual’s particular sin. However, sometimes suffering and pain is the direct result of a particular sin.**

“27 So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 **This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep.**”
(1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

If this man’s paralysis is because of his sin (And in this instance it might have been)....**What was his sin? We do not know.** Jesus’ words could be translated just as well as a general command not to do something, i.e. ‘Do not

sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you.' In this context, where no particular sinful activity of the man is mentioned, **Jesus' prohibition is best understood in a general way because John does not explain Jesus' statement.**

(My question is...) How come ONLY he was given this warning? Nicodemus...NO. The woman at the well...NO. The Samaritans...NO! The royal official...NO! Doesn't "sin no more" apply to them also??? To "us"?

"15 The man went and reported to the Jews that **it was Jesus** who had made him well." When Jesus healed him of 38 years of pain and suffering (various ways), the man never bothered to ask him his name. Never probed any further. BUT now he knows Jesus' name....he must have asked someone after being approached by Jesus in the temple.

But...when Jesus says **"See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you."**....all of the sudden "who does he think he is???"

"What a difference there was between this man and so many others who encountered the living Christ. Most of them, having felt Jesus' healing touch, having received blessings from His hand, would have crawled over glass to bear witness to Him as their Lord. **But this man, who received the physical blessing of healing, apparently never went past the physical to soul saving faith."**

Those eased of the punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin. **Jesus saw it necessary to give this caution; because it is common for us, when sick, to promise much; when newly recovered, to forget all about the promise.**

It seems to me that Jesus is more concerned with him not sinning....then his physical healing. So, in my life....the miracle I may need comes second in importance to my need to stop sinning. **HERE IS WHAT WE KNOW...there is, then, something worse than thirty-eight years of hopeless wretchedness and paralysis!**

This is what our culture doesn't understand...why Jesus is counter cultural - **"I love you...stop sinning!"**. **Jesus can, and does, say this to every single person....no matter, location, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation - no matter who you are Jesus says "I love you...STOP SINNING"**. Let it be noticed that he who said, "do not sin anymore," said, "Rise up, take up your mat, and walk." These things, which appeared utterly beyond the power of this man, were, nevertheless, done by him through the grace of Christ.

"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not make a practice of sinning..." (1 John 5:18) **Because you are well!!!! That is what you are!!!**

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light....Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:9-11)

Jesus knows the "something worse". Christ spoke of the wrath to come, which is beyond compare worse than the many hours, nay, weeks and years of pain, some wicked men have to suffer in consequence of their unlawful indulgences. And if such afflictions are severe, how dreadful will be the everlasting punishment of the wicked! **If he is in fact referring to Hell, external separation from God - experiencing His wrath on sin - Jesus knows. Here in this moment he knows what is comingthe cross.**

CONCLUSION:

“**16** Therefore (For this reason), the Jews began persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.” “**17** Jesus responded to them, “**My Father is still working, and I am working also.**” **18** This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.”

Think what Jesus could have chosen to say in his defense. He could have argued that the Old Testament nowhere said that it was wrong to do good on the Sabbath. He could have argued that the man was not “working” on the Sabbath by carrying his bed, but was instead witnessing to what God had done in his life, and therefore he was “worshiping,” not working.

But if Jesus argued like that, he would be operating within the constraints of the Old Testament and under its authority. What Jesus had done was within the constraints of the law, and that case could certainly have been made. However, Jesus himself was not under the authority of the law, but was the Author himself.

Now begins the transition in Jesus’ relationship with the Jewish leaders. Now, in this passage, Jesus crosses the line.

Could Jesus be so merciful....in all His supernatural knowledge....to come to Jerusalem that day....to seek out and find and heal a man who would in turn give His name to the Jewish leaders.....who would then persecute him....and plan to kill him. Could Jesus be that merciful? The answer is yes.....and amen!