

Sermon: Life Down at the Pool: A Model for Healing

Text: **John 5:1-18 ESV**

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Introduction: “People are hopeless because they hope in the wrong things”....Nothing could be worse than hope that is hopeless. Hope in Jesus Christ is certain hope which cannot fail.” (Richard Halverson’s *No Greater Power*)

John 5:1-18 ESV 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.[c] 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews[d] said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well!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.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” 18 This was 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.

Footnotes: [c] John 5:3 Some manuscripts insert, wholly or in part, waiting for the moving of the water; 4for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had

[d] John 5:10 The Greek word Ioudaioi refers specifically here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, who opposed Jesus in that time; also **verses 15, 16, 18**

Those of you who also have the NIV text and are really sharp may have noticed that **verse 4** is missing in Chapter 5 of John as it is in the ESV. **Verse 4** is included in the KJV. **Verse 4** is really believed to be a scribal addition to the original text to help make sense of why the people were all lying about the pool. Those of you with the ESV or NIV translations don't need to feel cheated though, because you'll probably find **verse 4** in your footnotes.

We can only speculate as to why the invalid in our story was down at the pool. Just like church, not everybody comes for the same reason or even the right reason. **BUT**

1. It may have been for the fellowship. Many were disabled. They may have been trading stories about their diseases or handicaps, i.e., “oh, that’s nothing” kind of talk. “The man who had lain there 38 years, like all the others, was a victim of a kind of religion that supported a tradition or legend which was inherently cruel and vicious (Craddock, *John*, p.43).”

There were probably two groups of infirmed: a positive-attitude group and a negative-attitude group. One was hopeful, the other critical about those who were first to get in the water. You know, people with mild cases of chapped lips or hangnails.

The crowd around the pool may have come for:

2. Excitement/anticipation - just to see if someone would get healed today.

It may have simply been for some the:

3. Last resort, when everything else has been tried and had failed.

Many times this is the sad story about humanity. A person either tries religion as a last resort or somehow his religion and spiritual resources degenerate into superstition like totems and rabbit foots.

Even the Word of God was treated this way - Listen to Jesus' words later in our chapter. **John 5:39-40 ESV** ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

“Faith” in our story had become superstition in its worst form. Faith was in a process, not God. Sacraments and even ordinances like baptism can be viewed like that.

The question may be posed: Are you a Christian? “Yes, I am baptized,” comes the response. But an encounter with Christ is more than getting wet in the baptism as the story about Simon the Sorcerer or Magician shows.

Acts 8:9-20 ESV 9 But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

In this model for conversion here in **John 5** there are three tasks. We need to:

I. Recognize Our Condition.

3 In these (*porches*) lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. The word *disabled* in the NIV or *invalid* in the ESV here means powerless. (KJV - *impotent*)

The world is ailing and sick, weak and powerless without Christ. Paul speaks of this condition in his letter to the Romans. **Romans 5:6-8 ESV** 6 For while we were still weak (*powerless*, NIV; *without strength*, KJV), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Back to **John 5, verses 6-7** reads, - 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” (*well*, NIV, *whole*, KJV)

7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.”

The key to this Sign – What is under the surface is the idea of “wholeness”. Of the 12 times this Greek word (that means *wholeness, wellness, healed*) is used in the N.T., John uses the word for wholeness 6 times in this passage.

This passage in John gives us a model for conversion. Christ always gives priority to spiritual wellness and healing *even* over physical wholeness.

Matthew 18:7-9 ESV **7** “Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! **8** And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. **9** And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

We were all sick once and will die without Christ’s healing touch spiritually. The man needed to recognize that he needed help and to trust in Christ rather than the pool or the myth about the *reported* healing waters.

The man was in sin. It reads in our text in [verse 14](#) - Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

The invalid in the story knew he was a sinner because his own culture and religion told him so. It also says so in [Romans 3:23](#) - “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Today our politically-correct and post-Christian culture discounts sin and calls it maladjustment or some psychological disorder. They call it everything but what it is: breaking God’s commandments.

For every action against God (sin) there is a reaction either here and now or in the Judgment to come. No one will escape God’s righteous judgment.

So after we recognize our condition, another task would be to:

II. Recognize The Cure.

Jesus once said: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Jesus offers the cure in Himself. Faith in Christ is the answer to all our conditions.

John 14:6 ESV ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

When I was listening to our text in **John 5**, I kept remembering a play by Samuel Beckett entitled *Waiting for Godot*. The play is a sad commentary about a world that is in despair, engaged in useless and meaningless activity, waiting for Godot who never comes. How many people do we know like our invalid in **John 5** waiting on the wrong things and even the wrong people to make their lives whole? The prophet Isaiah tells us, **Isaiah 40:31 ESV** but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

We were all sick once, unable to help ourselves. We were going through life handicapped, not recognizing God when He was right there. We were not even able to hear His clear and distinct voice over the din and noise of the world. It was at that point Jesus met us, maybe even unexpectedly, and offered us life.

This offer of life is still contingent upon whether we accept or reject God as revealed in his Son, Jesus of Nazareth. This choice to believe will affect our present and future life. Resurrection is both now and coming for all of us. Jesus says rise, get up (**5:8**). Faith is the response that separates those who receive life from those who will be condemned. Faith is a life and death decision.

One has to read past John 3:16 for at least two more verses. Listen to what it says:

John 3:16-18 ESV ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

In our story, there is no faith healing. The invalid did not even know Jesus' name. His being made whole was a pure act of grace. Today, however, we are without excuse. We have heard of Jesus, and to be saved, we must place our faith in Him.

Finally we need to:

III. Recognize the Need for Commitment.

Donald Grey Barnhouse asked, Why all this viciousness? Why this desire to destroy the meek and lowly Jesus? Why this murderous attempt to do away with God? The answer is here in the Sabbath question. They wanted rules, they did not want God's grace. They wanted human merit. They did not want the simplicity of divine pardon. They wanted to do something for themselves. They had it all worked out. They would make a show of keeping a day as sacred, while their hearts wallowed in lust and their minds conceived schemes of greed. Their avarice could swell to outrageous proportions, but the Sabbath would be their cloak. Keeping a day would be their mask ("The Christian and the Sabbath," *Commentary on Romans 14:5-6*).

Seventh-Day Adventists quote: "Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy"

In some cases Sunday (the Christian Sabbath) is the only day that we seem to do Christian things.

Reread verses 16-18

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." 18 This was 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.

The Sabbath command does not mean do nothing, but to do the work of God. It is not a day to rest from God's work. It is not a day to sleep in, go to the beach, or avoid the assembling of the saints.

Some in our culture have a warped view that everyday is a Sabbath and then don't do anything/anyday for God. Sadly many do not ever observe *any* day for worship.

How tragic that religious people could get so involved with a man carrying his bedroll who they thought had been healed on the wrong day and not see the glory of God all about them. Here was a man suffering for thirty-eight years, and all they could see was someone breaking a religious rule.

You will notice in our text this morning there are a number of commands by Jesus.

verse 14 – Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

There are also more positive commands from Jesus.

In verse 8, He says - **“Get up (Rise, KJV)! take up your bed, and walk.”**

Symbolically, of course, Rise and get up are also referring to Resurrection

And walk is just another way of speaking about how we conduct our lives.

It is not enough just to stop sinning. We must start doing what God wants us to do. You will notice that the healed man is found back in the temple.

If this story is a model for us, then I believe we must also confess Jesus to others. We must witness to what He has done in *our* lives.

When people ask us why we are the way we are, we should tell them that it is Jesus who healed us, made us whole (well). This is not a story about an invalid so much as it is a story about Jesus who is the source of every kind of life.

We do not know if this man ever went back to the pool – to his old sinful life or even to witness back there.

The difference between life at the pool and the Church is the invalid was expecting a miraculous encounter with the water but instead had a miraculous encounter with Christ. We should come to church expecting to encounter Jesus, Our Healer.

With all the talk of water in this story it is not difficult to drift into a baptismal illustration.

You must understand, though, that baptism is of no value by itself. A person must recognize his condition, the cure, and the commitment that is required. He must first encounter Jesus.

Conclusion: By itself, baptism will not save you, but if coupled with repentance, faith, confession and then a commitment to God as a result of your love, God will save you.

Jesus says not only to the man in our text, but to every one of us: “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” If we can obey our Lord, what Beasley-Murray says about the man in our story and the potential of the invalid’s healing will also be true for us: “An amazing future follows the amazing present.”

**The question in —[verse 6](#) remains:
Do You Want To Be Healed, Whole and Well?**

What Do You Want????

In the healing of the invalid man we see a sign-miracle regarding Jesus as Sovereign over the moral realm of man.

G. Campbell Morgan observed, “On the human level, what Jesus did that day, and what He said that day, cost Him His life. The religious rulers never forgave Him.”

But, Jesus cared, and He paid the price. He gave His life for you and me!

Will you give your life back to Him, Your Creator and Redeemer?