

And He's Not Your Lucky Charm!

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[0 : 00] John's Gospel, chapter five, if you're visiting with us and need a Bible, excuse me, there's a Bible in the chair in front of you underneath and the black Bible, it's there.

Go towards the back. They renumber the New Testament. Excuse me, and find page 74 of that, page 74 in that black Bible to find John chapter five, John chapter five.

We're gonna study this morning the first 18 verses in John's Gospel, just trucking through John's Gospel. John chapter five, verses one through 18.

I'm gonna read, then we'll jump in. After these things, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

And there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. And these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered.

[1 : 06] I'm jumping to verse five. And a certain man was there who had been 38 years in his sickness. And Jesus saw him lying there, knew he had been already in that condition.

He said to him, Do you wish to become whole? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water's stirred, but while I'm coming, another steps down before me.

Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your pallets, and walk. And immediately the man became whole and took up his pallets and walked.

Now it was the Sabbath on that day. Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, It is a Sabbath. It is not permitted for you to carry your pallets.

But he answered them, The one who made me whole was the one who said to me, Take up your pallet and walk. They asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up and walk? But he who was healed did not know who it was.

[2 : 07] For Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd there. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, Look, you have become whole. Sin no more so that nothing worse may happen to you.

The man went away and told the Jews it was Jesus who made him whole. And for this reason, the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on Sabbath, but he answered them, My Father until now is working and I myself am working.

Therefore for this reason, verse 18, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because he not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

People have many kinds of lucky charms. I'm not talking about the cereal. It's wonderful. That cereal is with the little marshmallows. Mmm, that's good. Frosted lucky charms, they're magically delicious.

Anyways, you know, you just Google lucky charms and U.S. News had the seven good luck charms from around the world. I won't tell you from where it's from, some of them you might know.

- [3 : 26] A rabbit's foot, that's from the U.S. Um, am I reading that? Carp scales from a fish. I think that was like the Netherlands. Ew, that's disgusting. Uh, scarabs, also known as dung beetles.
- Yeah. Yeah, Egyptian. Who said Egyptian? Yeah, Egyptian. Yeah, Egyptians, they, there's something, uh, good luck charm with dung beetles. Yeah, let's move on.
- Um, acorns, or excuse me, acorns, I can't even read my own writing. Acorns, oh, swastikas. In, back in the day, it used to actually be lucky charms before it became something, a symbol of evil.
- An evil eye bead, you find it in Turkey. That's an eye, and there's like a center, and that's like supposed to give you, it's like a lucky charm. The color red, where do you think that is?
- [4 : 39] China, yeah. Red is actually for good luck, a good luck charm in China. The world has its lucky charms, necklaces, bracelets, your karma, and we know it's bogus, it is, it's bogus, there's no such thing.
- But do we have our own lucky charms? Or do we make God into a lucky charm? John's gospel is directed to the readers to come believe Jesus.
- Believe into Jesus. Receive Jesus. Know Jesus. And last week, we looked at, come receive Jesus, but he's not your genie in a bottle. He's not your genie in a bottle, and today, he's not your lucky charm.
- He's not your genie, and he's not your lucky charm. If we follow X, Y, Z, do we think we're gonna get good from him?
- If we do, if we have, fill in the blank. Receive Jesus in a personal, real, intimate, communal way, not as your lucky charm.
- [6 : 18] Has God become nothing more to us than a lucky charm? If we follow the X, Y, Z, do we think we'll get good?
- If we follow, we attend a good church, we read our Bible and pray, we have good theology, we focus on the gospel, we do evangelism, we live a selfless life, we be a good spouse or a good parent, we work hard, we live a godly life, we do all the right things, we love our family, and we think we do this, this is our lucky charm, and now God's gonna give this to me.
- Well, now he's just impersonal. Now he's just a thing. When we suffer in this life, have we thought that maybe our suffering is from sin in our lives?
- And maybe the sin is the very thing that you're doing, maybe God has become nothing but a lucky charm to you. You ever thought about maybe that's your sin? Our world is confused about God because they're lost, they're fallen.
- and their confusion shows in their religious superstition, superstitions. But Jesus is the direct reflection, as one writer put it, of God's personal and powerful work.
- [7 : 51] And then another writer, he says this, stop sinning and start trusting him. Stop sinning, trust him, him in a personal way.
- What's interesting is that as you read these first 18 verses in John's gospel, you see that the lame man and the Jews, they're both guilty of the same thing.
- The lame man and the Jews were both guilty of the same thing. they both disconnected God from his power. For the man, God was nothing more than a magic potion to heal him.
- For the Jews, it was their man-made laws. Specifically, it's not permitted for you to do that on the Sabbath. Jesus is the true personal agent of God's personal and powerful nature and he calls us to trust him.

This passage also tells us a lot, or at least some, I should say, about afflictions and this connection to sin. Afflictions and suffering really are the effect of sin and it may be connected to a certain personal sin or may not be.

[9 : 25] But do we superstitiously think that stuff happens outside of God's personal involvement in our lives? Do we really think that? Maybe you can't see all that God is doing.

Maybe it is a direct result of your sin. Maybe it isn't. But the point is, do we trust him and his word?

Trust him and his word. Let this message reveal the true depth of your trust and you can ask yourself this question, has God become nothing more than just a lucky charm for me to get what I really want?

And if I don't get that, do I doubt him? This healing is the third sign in John's gospel and from this sign Jesus will launch to a huge teaching about his identity and how the Jews use their belief system as a lucky charm for God and you'll see it in chapter 5 verse 39.

Jesus will say, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is these that bear witness of me. You trust Jesus.

[10 : 55] You don't worship the Bible, you trust the Jesus of the Bible. The Bible's the truth, absolutely. Absolutely. Anyways, let's jump into the passage.

Notice, you see first the first aspect with this man. You see first the magical superstitious charm. It's the stirring of the waters.

That's the magic. The superstition of the water. It starts out in verse 1 after these things, loose connection to chapter 4. There's this feast. We're not told which one.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem and near the sheep gate there was this pool that had five porticos. There were public baths and these public baths is very common in the ancient world and it was open to the public and especially a place for beggars which is called in Hebrew Bethesda.

It's a better translation. It actually means house of outpouring. These pools were fed by large reservoirs called Solomon's pools but they're also fed by springs so these springs would rise up and turn the waters and the ancient world thought them to be medicinal and in many cases they were magical.

[12 : 16] People became superstitious that they would do something to heal you of some ailment, disease, and sickness. Notice it says in verse 3 in these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered, large number, physical inability.

They were paralyzed, had some disease and it was a tradition of folklore and possibly even Jewish tradition that stirring the waters would bring healing to these sick people. And if you notice I skipped the end of verse 3 into verse 4 because I believe as well as others that verse 4 was added later.

It's not a part of John's original gospel. The oldest manuscripts don't have the end of verse 3 into verse 4 and the later manuscripts that do have it to have an unnatural diversity of variant forms not to mention they would have an asterisk in some of the manuscripts to mark that the words were in addition.

Plus there was there's use of non-Johannian words in this one verse one and a half verses but it was added to explain verse 7 when this man that said nobody would help me go down to the waters and was stirred up.

So here Jesus he's dealing with something. He would deal with the concept of the impersonal power of God. These people thought that God was nothing more than a lucky charm.

[13 : 42] They had these superstitious beliefs about God and they disconnected him from his personal intimate interacting power. But when he works his focus is set on his son the Lord Jesus.

look at verse 5 so here's this man who'd been there for 38 years not told the sickness and yet we later learn he's lame can't walk liked it for 38 years and at this point all hope was lost.

No cure was in sight for him. He would die as a lame disabled man. It was sad but look what happens in verse 6 when Jesus saw him lying and knew he had already been in a long time like that and either he learned it Jesus learned it from others or it was a way by which he had his divine knowledge and if it is from his divine knowledge then Jesus sovereignly picked him out of the rest maybe because of his sin but God showed this man grace.

Jesus showed this man grace. Jesus was so compassionate upon this man but I want you before we go on get the picture. Here is the creator of the universe walking through the midst of this huge group of sick people who superstitiously thought that this place was sacred and it would heal them all the while the creator of the universe is walking by who can simply just speak the word and they would be instantaneously healed.

Isn't that ironic? They had no idea it was right in front of their faces. The end of verse 6.

[15 : 41] Do you wish to get well? Well that's a loaded question. What do you think pal? Why is Jesus asking him this?

You think this is kind of weird? Why do you think I'm here buddy? For my health? Get it? But maybe a key is found in the verb which you don't see in the English to get.

I don't know why they translate it like that. the verb is which means become. And that word become takes us back to the prologue in chapter 1 which express God's creative work in the world.

All things came into being by him. They came genomae. And the word well it can actually mean whole, sound, healthy.

So that's why I translated it for you. Do you wish to become whole? Now this is a deeper question. Jesus was pursuing something greater than just healing this guy.

[17 : 02] he was challenging this man's whole confusion about God. He was challenging him. Verse 7.

I'm sure I have no man to put me into the pool when the water stirred up. When I'm coming another steps in before me. The water became disturbed. And that would be the time someone would go down into the water for this lame man.

He thought some dude just passing by. He's taking pity on me. It almost looks like he's trying to manipulate Jesus. While I'm coming, maybe you could help me? Would you?

Here's an old man grumbling. So maybe you can help me get into the water? But the guy missed the significant question. And he missed the significant words.

Went over his head. The point is the man believed in some form of magic, superstition, an impersonal power from God. It was in the waters.

[18 : 10] And some Christians, they like to mix biblical Christianity with their superstition. They do that with their magical beliefs. And this is what both the Jews and this lame man had done to God.

They separated God from God, from his character. are we disconnecting the God we claim to know from the power we believe he enacts just like a lucky charm?

Do we do this and get good luck? Sorry, we don't believe in luck. To get good providence. Look how Jesus responds to him, verse 8.

Jesus said to him, rise, three commands, three aspects of this command. Rise, take up your pallet and walk. Rise, pick up, walk. Threefold command.

Interesting too. The word who spoke the word at creation to create spoke with the same powerful word. The word has spoken.

[19 : 22] And he instantaneously healed this man. He got up, immediately says, verse 9. The man became whole, picked up his pallet and walked.

It's amazing. The 38 year bondage was abolished immediately. This man was confronted with the real personal relational power of God.

Because God showed him compassion. God showed him mercy. grace. God does that to us. You don't deserve grace.

You don't deserve salvation. He shows you grace. That's why it's called grace. It's undeserved. God saved us. Why should he save us? And the fact that he was able to carry his own bed and walk, that was proof the cure was complete and total.

God showed amazing grace to this man. God is God So who is it who merges, who unites, who combines, who blends God and his great awesome power in a personal way is Jesus.

[20 : 35] God is working his great plan in and through his son by the Holy Spirit who indwells his people and the way that Christ is still working his plan is through his own body, through us, the church.

God is still working by the way. God is still working his plan upon the world and the primary agent he's using to accomplish it is the local church.

That's our mission. He's still working and the primary way he shows his glory is through us, the church. So here you have this magical superstitious charm and then it moves into another charm.

It moves into the keeping man-made law charm. Because look at the next part of verse 9, it should not be separated, it should be right with it. Now it was Sabbath on that day.

By the way, it was Sabbath. This man had God confusion but so did the religious leaders. They both had God confusion. They both suffered from the same sickness.

[21 : 45] Verse 10, Jews were saying to him who was cured, it's a Sabbath. It's not permitted for you to carry your pallet.

The religious leaders gave their interpretation of the law which was devoid of God and their mindset. Telling him he couldn't carry his pallet. And here's the irony, this lame man who now walks, he could not see who Jesus really was and the Jews, the religious leaders who are the teachers of the law and they're telling people how to follow it, they needed someone to teach them.

They both needed Jesus. What's truly the violation? What's truly the violation?

The personal power of God or rather the misconception of the impersonal power of God. That's really the problem going on. For the man, magic, it was in the water.

For the Jews, magic was in keeping the law. Yet they both missed what was going on. And see, by the way, friends, this is more than just a healing.

[22 : 58] This was a signpost. You know, a sign that says, don't go this way, do not enter. It's telling you, don't come in this way. A sign that says stop.

A sign that says, work, in progress. The flashing light that tells you when you're going to Rome, slow down, slow down, slow down, slow down, right? It's flashing at you and screaming at you.

It's the sign. And this is a sign. It's flashing at them. Because this healing, it would point to the unique relationship of the eternal son with the father and that the father has sent his son who's not a lucky charm, but he's the Messiah.

He's the, what did the Samaritans say? The savior of the world. That's why John wrote, Jesus did many other signs. They're not recorded in this book, but these have been written that you may believe, may trust, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and in believing you may have life in his name.

God's personal involvement in our lives.

[24 : 14] Are we seeing him work in our lives? He's no lucky charm. Trust him. You might be here and not know him at all.

Maybe you're here and you don't know Jesus. You haven't put your trust in Jesus. You haven't turned from your sin and trusted Jesus. You should do that today. You should repent and trust in Christ. He'll save you.

He'll show you grace. He'll forgive you and change you. Come. He'll save you. This is amazing.

Look at verse 11. But he answered them, the one who made me whole was the one who said to me, take up your pallet and walk.

The man laid the blame on Jesus, the healer. Got out of that one. He was able to defend himself and get out of that jam with the religious leaders.

[25 : 17] By the way, that's what the Jews mean here, the religious leaders. Again, the man who made me whole was the one who said to me, take up your pallet and walk.

Verse 12, they asked him, who's the man who said to you, take up and walk? This is shockingly ironic. Get this.

Do you see this? This guy was lame for 38 years and that has been eclipsed in their minds because he's carrying a pallet on Sabbath? What is the matter with you?

This one day drowns out 38 years? What? They were more concerned that Jesus had breached our code than that this 38 year lame man could now walk.

They were so blind. and notice the lack of compassion. Well, yeah, you should be carrying a pallet. Who's the one who's filled with compassion?

[26 : 26] Who's the one who's filled with mercy? Who's the one who's filled with love for this man? Not them. Jesus. So compassionate.

So merciful. This guy didn't deserve it. And yet they were so consumed with their lucky charm.

This guy was waiting for some magical potion to heal him was now questioned because he was healed on the Sabbath. I mean, didn't they see the fallacy of some magical pool anyways?

Well, maybe if it wasn't done on Sabbath, and they were both God confused. Neither one trusted him.

Well, look what happens. Verse 13, he didn't know where he was. Jesus, he was able to slip away unnoticed amongst all the hoopla.

[27 : 36] And then verse 14, afterward, Jesus found him in the temple. Not by chance. man needed to be warned by Jesus. Notice what he says. Look, you have become whole.

God had worked in your life. The word had spoke the word. And then he says here, do not sin anymore. Literally, sin no longer. Or else something worse is going to happen to you.

Whoa. Now, the sin no longer, this could be translated as either stop sinning or just as a general prohibition, sin no longer. But basically, whichever it is, he's saying, if you don't stop doing that, do me greater results, greater things will come to you, greater consequences.

Well, what is this sin? Jesus doesn't tell us. We're not told, but it seems to be his magical belief in God, which separated God from himself.

His power, God's power worked independent from God. God was nothing more to him than a lucky charm. He didn't truly believe in God. So for this man, it seems that his sin was unbelief.

[28 : 52] He didn't believe. His focus was not upon the agent of God's work, was not upon Jesus, was not trusting in Jesus, was not believing in Jesus.

No, it was just little impersonal thing, magic, superstitious stuff. The lucky charm. By the way, this teaches us some lessons about the relation between our sin and suffering.

Suffering we may be facing as a possible result from our sin. This tells us something. here's some teachings for us.

All suffering and all affliction is from sin. That is, it's a result from the fall in Genesis 3. And yet some suffering may be from a stupid decision and we end up sinning.

So all types of suffering, we're not meant to suffer, that's a result from the fall. any type of suffering, affliction, trial, that's a result from the fall.

[30 : 03] So it's indirectly related to sin, the sin from Adam. Yet, we see here, some suffering may be from a specific sin that you did.

And what's the result? Affliction, a trial, a difficult time in your life. Some suffering comes as a direct result from our sin.

Well, then how do you know? Well, it's very clear when we see that we fail to trust Jesus, when we're not trusting Him, when there's a lack of belief, who is Jesus, who is the personal manifestation of God's power, and we view God simply as a lucky charm, as a superstitious, impersonal being.

And then Jesus says for this man, if he would not sin no longer, something worse will come to him. Something worse is going to happen to him. I don't think the guy was listening.

He's not really painted in a favorable light, is he? Look at verse 15. The man went away and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who made him whole. He just didn't get it. It doesn't look like he heeded Jesus' warning.

[31 : 33] He just wanted to save his own skin. Look at verse 16, what happens. And for this reason, the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Now the Jews did not deny Jesus' power. The problem was they did these works on the Sabbath. They both had the same outlook on God, just a mere impersonal lucky charm.

For them it was the law. For them specifically the law it was Sabbath. But now look at Jesus' response. Look at verse 17. He answered them, my father until now is working and I myself am working.

God rested on the Sabbath but does that mean he's inactive? Of course not. God sustains his world. If God kept the Sabbath, how would he uphold the universe?

And he sustains it by means of his son who is also working. what applies to God applies to Jesus. That's what he's saying. See, Jesus equated his work with his father's work and thus equated himself with God the father.

[32 : 58] That's what he's doing. So as God divinely works, not subject to some human law, so Jesus, it's for God, it's for me too.

So together both the father and the son are working. Jesus was violating Sabbath, that's their man-made law. He was God's agent who did, as one writer put, quote, what no one denied God could do on Sabbath.

He healed this man. This is going to come up later too, later in John's gospel. Jesus will bring this up later. They were more concerned about their little lucky charm of Sabbath than about the personal, interacting, communal, relational, power of God, and trusting him.

So Jesus, my father is personally at work in the world, and I, being equal to God, am also personally working in the world. He spoke of the unique father-son relationship between them, and that's really some mission of Jesus.

I've come to do my father's will, I and the father are one. Off. They knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Verse 18, for this reason, therefore, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

[34 : 21] Well, they fully understood what he was saying about himself, and about them. For them, they totally missed the whole point of Sabbath, and for Jesus, he equated himself with God.

Not only breaking the Sabbath, but also calling his own father, God his own father, making himself equal with God. That's why they sought all the more to kill him. They totally misunderstood God, the very one whom they thought they were defending.

They thought they were defending God, and yet, they totally missed it. And actually, in their misunderstanding and missing it, they were actually rejecting God.

They weren't believing him. They weren't trusting him. And then Jesus, which we'll look at next week, next two weeks, he'll launch into this discourse about who he is, and how the scriptures speak about him, and trusting in him.

And God. I'll leave you with this. Our thinking about God, it can be shaped and clouded, I brought this up last week, our thinking about God can be shaped and clouded by our context, our opinions, our imaginations, our desires, our emotions, and our circumstances.

[36 : 00] Our thinking about God, it can be shaped and then clouded by these different aspects. And it's this thinking that confuses us about God, and we may end up making him some impersonal force, like a lucky charm.

So good things will happen to us, like some kind of magical, mystical way. You'll do things right in the church, and things should prosper, right?

Doesn't work that way, does it? This is sinful, friends. For us to think of God this way, we're not trusting him.

And if you're not trusting God, you're disobeying God. And if you're not obeying God, it means you're sinning. God wants us to trust him personally.

That's why he sent Jesus. He's the personal, close God. That's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper. He's close to us. Jesus brings us to God.

[37 : 19] It's about Jesus and focusing upon him and who he is and what he's done for us. He's intimate, he's close, he's personal. That's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper and call it communion. You're communing in a real way through the Lord Jesus Christ, God's agent who died for us.

He loves you. Why won't we trust him? Trust the Lord. Trust the Lord.

Trust the God. Has God become nothing more to us than a lucky charm? I challenged you earlier on in the message.

This message would challenge you to evaluate the depth of your trust. And that's the great thing about this, the great truth I should say, that when we come to the Lord's table and we examine our hearts, we say, Lord, we say with that man, help my unbelief.

My trust is so weak. And that's good because that's why Jesus had to die. He had to die because our trust is weak. So we examine our hearts and we say, Lord, help my unbelief, help me to trust you even more and to make this a personal, intimate relationship with you.

[38 : 48] and this Lord's supper is open to you if you come from a church of like faith and practice, we would be our preference, you're baptized by immersion.

Partake of the Lord's supper with us. But I also want to encourage you in two ways. One, if you don't know Jesus, this is not for you. And second, if you have something against someone, you've not reconciled with that person and gone to reconcile with that person, it would be better for you not to partake of the Lord's supper.

First, go try to reconcile and then come and partake of it with us. This is a way, we had baptism last month, the beginning of the month, to remind us of what God has done for us, but then we, as the initial coming to Christ, and then we partake of the Lord's supper to remind us of our continual relationship with Jesus.

And what he's done for us, and it should drive us to trust him more. Don't let it drive you away from Jesus, let it drive you to Jesus, to trust him.

Remind yourself and renew your allegiance, your commitment to him, and your love for him. Let it be relational, not just a lucky charm. Would you pray with me?

[40 : 14] God, our father, it's so easy for us to move into this impersonal relationship with you.

We can get so sidetracked from that. Lord, we pray as we have come to your word, oh Jesus, you are the word.

Lord, as we come to your word, may it direct us to you, to love you, to worship you, to trust you, to desire you, to long for you, to yearn for you, to be motivated towards you.

Quench our thirst. We confess to you, Jesus. Father, we confess to you, we have made you to a genie, we have made you to a lucky charm.

So thank you, you forgive us for that. So we renew our love for you, our passion for you, our commitment to you, and to your truth.

[41 : 54] But you are the truth, so we renew our commitment to you, the everlasting God. As we do each week, let this be a time of silence, it's like for about a minute or so.

Reflect, examine your heart. Direct this to the gospel, direct yourself to Jesus and Him crucified, to grace and mercy shown to you.

This be a time of acknowledging sin, confessing to Him, repenting from sin, turn from it. And don't run away from God, run to Him. Run to Him to Him personally, intimately.

Say, Jesus, I trust you. Help my unbelief. Would you take a few moments to do that now, please? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

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