

Jesus at the Pool

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[0 : 00] Well, before we jump into God's Word, I just want to wish all of you mothers a happy Mother's Day. Hopefully you get a chance to connect with your children today, and that it's a great day for you.

Let's pray as we go to the Word of God. Father in Heaven, we thank you so much for your Word. Thank you that you have spoken to us, and that in these moments we have the opportunity to hear from you, God.

We ask that you'd open our hearts, open our minds, enable us to hear, enable us to see what we need to see and hear from you. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, have you ever wondered what it would be like if Jesus were to go to the local swimming pool? That's exactly where we find Jesus today in the story which John tells.

John chapter 5, verse 1. Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem, near the Sheep Gate, a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.

[1 : 15] To be fair, a trip to the pool in Jesus' day would be very different from a trip to the pool in our day. Massive cultural differences.

This was a totally different time as well. You can imagine in that part of the world, in the Middle East, and in that day, people didn't have running water.

They didn't have plumbing in their houses. And so the local pool, that was a place to go and cool off, rinse off, drew a lot of people.

It was a bit of a social hub in the community. We don't really know exactly what it was like for Jewish people of Jesus' day, where they act like full-blown swimming in the pool or what.

We don't know. Some people think that the lower part of this pool here in Jerusalem, they actually found some of the remains of it north of the Temple Mount, that that part of the pool was used for ritual washing or bathing.

[2 : 17] We don't know for sure. But this is where we find Jesus. He's back in Jerusalem. He's at the pool. And what does Jesus see there?

Well, John tells us in verse 3 that here at the pool, a great number of disabled people used to lie. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, Do you want to get well? Sir, the invalid replied, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.

While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, Get up. Pick up your mat and walk.

At once, the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked. So here's Jesus at the pool and he does another amazing miracle.

[3 : 27] He's at the pool and John tells us that a great number of disabled people used to lie there. That word disabled, it's more generally a term for sickness or ill, but refers usually to people who have some kind of really serious debilitating condition or sickness.

He gives examples. People like the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. Now, why are these kinds of people at the pool?

Well, John tells us, it kind of comes out in verses 7 and verse 4. In verse 7, we kind of hear it a little bit in what the man says.

He says to Jesus, Jesus asked him, Do you want to get well? And the man says, Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.

The sense that we get from that is that, Well, I'm trying to be healed, but I can't get down into the water before, after the water is stirred because somebody else gets down in there first.

[4 : 39] So what's going on here? What's with this whole healing from going into the water after the water is stirred? Verse 4 gives us an answer to that question.

But depending on the translation that you're using in English, you may not have a verse 4 in your Bible. In my Bible, it just goes straight from verse 3 to verse 5.

So why is that? What's going on here? Well, there's a short answer to that and a long answer. And if you have more questions or thoughts, wonderings about why there's a whole verse missing in your Bible, I'd be happy to chat with you anytime.

Feel free to give me a call. The short answer is that today, because of modern-day archaeological discoveries, we actually have older and more accurate manuscripts or copies of the New Testament writings available to us than they did with the first English translation of the Bible, the King James in 1611.

And so those old manuscripts that we found, they don't have verse 4 in them. They just go straight from 3 into 5.

[5 : 55] So probably what took place is that somewhere along the lines, as people were reading John's account, they were wondering, well, what's this business about needing to get into the pool first in order to be healed?

And so somewhere along the line, somebody added in verse 4 to explain it. It's kind of probably a parenthetical comment. Verse 4 says this, that the people who were there, the disabled or the sick, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, they were waiting for the moving of the waters.

From time to time, verse 4, an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.

So because it probably wasn't in the original writing of John, we don't know for sure if it's true. It's possible that people really were healed, and if they were, then for sure we would give the glory and the credit for that to God.

And it's also possible that that was the prevailing thought or attitude or idea that there is more of a religious superstition, that, hey, this pool has magical healing properties, and occasionally from some kind of natural thing, it's probably a spring-fed pool or fed from some kind of moving water source, it would get stirred up, and people thought that you could be healed from it.

[7 : 33] At least this man thinks that way. Either way, this man thinks that way. And so he's trying to get into the pool. Jesus asks him, do you want to get well?

I'm trying. I've been trying to do it, but I can't. All my attempts have failed. Every time I try to get in there, somebody beats me in, and they get the healing, and I miss out.

Who is this man? Let's consider for a moment just who this man is. Verse 5.

One who was lying, one who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that, or knew that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, do you want to get well?

So, we're not told exactly what this man's condition was. We assume, just from what's said, that it was some kind of a paralysis.

[8 : 38] For whatever reason, or whatever condition he had, he wasn't able to walk. He'd lost the use of his legs, and so there he was lying on his mat. And John tells us that he had been, he had had this condition for 38 years.

Now, that's a long time. It's half the average lifespan of a Canadian citizen. Think of that. The last 38 years of your life lived in a wheelchair.

This is significant. This man has been through a lot. Notice that it's Jesus who initiates with him. In verse 6, when Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, do you want to get well?

So, Jesus comes to him and starts the conversation. The man basically says, I'm trying. I've been doing what I can to get into the water and be healed, but all my attempts have failed.

Jesus, we imagine, is looking right at him. In verse 8, he says, get up, pick up your mat, and walk.

[10 : 02] At once, the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked. Wow. This is amazing.

To give you a bit of a picture, I mean, just imagine what this would be like in modern day terms. There you are, you're at the hospital, you've been there for two weeks, you're in one of those rooms that has two beds, you're in one bed and there's another guy in the other bed, he's been there as long as you've been there, and every day, multiple times a day, you've watched as he presses the button and a nurse comes in and lifts his legs out of the bed and kind of slides him over into a wheelchair to help him get over to use the bathroom or to go for a little stroll down the hall.

And then one day, a stranger walks into the room and says to this man lying in the bed, do you want to get well?

Well, I have, I've been trying, I'm doing everything I can. Get up. Get out of the bed. Can you imagine how shocked you would be if in that moment he just stood up and started walking around?

This is amazing for anybody who knew this man or who was a regular at the pool and saw this man from time to time. Can you imagine the looks on their faces as Jesus says, get up.

[11 : 44] And this man stands up and begins walking around. Amazing. Well, that's not the end of the story. It goes on in verse 9.

John tells us, the day on which this took place was a Sabbath. And so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath. The law forbids you to carry your mat.

But he replied, the man who made me well said to me, pick up your mat and walk. So they asked him, who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk? The man who was healed had no idea who it was.

For Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. So John tells us that all of this, this healing, happened on a Sabbath.

And you can just imagine this poor man, I mean, he's having one of the best days of his life. And then all of a sudden, it's kind of squelched.

[12 : 48] He gets, in a sense, pulled over by the religious leaders. Today is the Sabbath day. What are you doing?

Carrying your mat on the Sabbath day. That's against the law. Now we probably should reflect a little bit on that.

The Sabbath, according to God's command, was a day that they were to take as a special day, a day of rest from all their regular work. God gave that command God gave that command to Moses.

And it was for the Israelites. But since then, rabbis and teachers had kind of added in a whole bunch of, we could call them sub-commands, or a little bit of a framework of various commands and laws that would help that if you kept them, it would keep you from breaking the big one of the Sabbath.

And so they had come up with a system of, or a classification system of 39 different kinds of work that you could not do on the Sabbath. And if you did these things, it was considered to be breaking the law of the Sabbath.

[14 : 06] Not treating the Sabbath day as holy. And one of those kinds of work was carrying something from one location to another. Amazingly, they applied this not just to, you know, obviously kind of work-related things, but even to small things.

According to one modern-day Jewish website, this is Orthodox Jewish belief, even carrying a key or a handkerchief outside of your home is considered work and breaking the Sabbath law of carrying, which prohibits carrying.

And this kind of legalism is applied even today by Orthodox Jews to a whole manner of things. I mean, it's considered work to write on a piece of paper on the Sabbath.

It's considered work to activate an electronic device of any kind or turn it off on the Sabbath. That's the modern-day equivalent of kindling a fire or extinguishing a fire, which is considered work.

Even something as simple as tearing a strip of toilet paper on the Sabbath is considered work by some of the most strict or stringent Orthodox Jews.

[15 : 30] And so this is a big deal for this man who's carrying his mat. He gets pulled over by the religious leaders and essentially charged with breaking the law.

And what does the man do? He kind of deflects a little bit. He says, the man who made me well said to me, pick up your mat and walk.

I'm just doing what the guy who healed me told me to do. And it seems that his tactic works because the next question that comes from the religious leaders is, well, who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?

And I think even the way it's phrased, they're not so interested in who is it that healed you. They're interested in who is it that told you to carry your mat, to pick it up and carry it on the Sabbath day.

We want to know his name. I mean, that's encouraging someone to break the law. And ironically, the man who was healed has no idea who it was.

[16 : 42] He didn't even know Jesus' name. It says he had just, Jesus had slipped away into the crowd after he was healed. Well, later in verse 14, Jesus found this man who had been healed at the temple and said to him, See, you are well again.

Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

So this is kind of the end of the story. Jesus runs into this guy again at the temple. And this time he has some very different kinds of words for him.

See, you are well again. You've been healed. You've received this amazing gift of God's grace. Now stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.

We'll come back to that in a moment. What does the man do? It says the man went away and he told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. That's probably not the response that we are expecting.

[17 : 55] If we think back to the royal official last Sunday after his son had been healed, he and his whole household, his whole family believed in Jesus. Like, the real kind of true faith.

But this man, even though he has just been healed miraculously, miraculously, it seems as though he goes back to the Jewish leaders and kind of reports who it was that had made him well, but also who it was that had told him that he should break the law.

Not the kind of grateful response that we're expecting to see here. Well, what are we supposed to see in all of this?

Well, there's lots here, but as we've been doing throughout this series, we want to take a few minutes just to focus in on what we see of the glory of Jesus. This is part of why John is writing, that we would see how Jesus is glorious, how he is full of God's grace, full of God's truth.

How do we see that here? Well, I think the first and most obvious way that we see Jesus' glory is in the miraculous power which he brings to bear upon this man.

[19 : 18] This is an amazing healing. I mean, think of this. 38 years this man has been unable to walk. He's been lying on his mat or in the bed. Think of what needs to happen in his legs for him to go from that, 38 years of not using them, to standing up and walking around.

If you've ever had any kind of surgery on your knee or your hip, then you know that it can take weeks of physio to regain the strength and the range of motion in order to be able to walk.

Yet Jesus takes him from not being able to walk, not having used his legs for almost 40 years, to instantly being able to walk just in a moment.

It's amazing. Jesus doesn't lay his hands on him. Jesus doesn't even utter any kind of formula or pronouncement.

He simply tells him to get up in some moment in there between Jesus saying get up and him actually trying to, his body is instantly cured.

[20 : 32] This is amazing. This is something that only God can do. And it's evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. The second way that we see the glory of Jesus here pertains to grace.

We see that Jesus is full of grace in this account. We see it in the fact that he heals the man. He gives him a gracious gift of God.

We see it in the fact that Jesus initiates all of this in the first place with the man. Especially when we think of last Sunday. This man didn't come to Jesus.

He didn't ask Jesus to do anything for him. He didn't even know who Jesus was. And before any of that Jesus heals him on the spot.

Jesus initiates this whole thing with him. Why? We read a little bit in verse 6 of why. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, do you want to get well?

[21 : 49] The sense that we see there is that Jesus was moved with compassion. The kindness and love in his heart just welled up inside him as he saw the man lying there on his mat and knew that he'd been there for a long time in that state, in that condition.

The grace of God is seen, the grace of Jesus is seen in how he's the one who makes the first move in all of this and offers this precious gift to the man.

we also see kind of the other side of grace, the mercy of Jesus here. Jesus knows that this man has not been living a life that pleases God.

He says as much in verse 14, see you are well again, stop sinning, sin no longer, which implies that he has been living a sinful life.

Jesus knows that. Not only that, but I think he probably knows too that this man leaves and goes to report to the religious leaders to tell on him in a sense.

[23 : 12] He seems very much ungrateful for the gift of God that he has received. And yet knowing all of that, it didn't stop Jesus from healing him and from giving him this gracious gift of God.

It's a good reminder to us of what grace really means. By definition, grace is unmerited favor.

It's kindness or favor from God that is, it doesn't come because it's earned. It doesn't come as an obligation. it's something that he offers out of his own free will and love and kindness and desire to help, to bless.

And we certainly see that with this man. Despite his character, despite his sin, Jesus shows him mercy.

He gives him that which he does not deserve, which he has done nothing to merit or earn, this amazing gift of healing.

[24 : 31] We also see that Jesus is full of truth. How do we see that here? Well, probably the easiest place to see that is in verse 14. Jesus says those choice words to him.

See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. Now, those words, they don't sound very nice.

We'll just put it that way. They're not the kind of words that you want to hear from anyone. But these words come a little differently on the lips of Jesus because of who he is.

He's not just some self-righteous religious leader passing judgment with this comment. No, Jesus, as John has been telling us, is the Son of God.

He is God himself who has become flesh and is now walking among us. And he knows what's going on inside people. He knew it with Nathanael, he knew it with the Jews that he had encountered earlier at the Passover in Jerusalem last time he was here.

[25 : 42] He knew what was going on inside Nicodemus. He knew the past of the Samaritan woman. He knew the thoughts and hearts of the crowd that he was talking with last Sunday when the royal official came in Cana.

He knows what's going on in this man's life as only God can know. And so these words take on a whole new level of meaning.

When he looks this man in the eye and says stop sinning. Sin no longer. I know how you've been living. And you need to turn away from those sinful attitudes and behaviors.

You've been made well. Now don't take that gift of God and use it to do more sin. or something worse may happen to you.

He says I don't think this is a self-righteous threat. I think this is a gracious warning. Jesus is full of truth and he brings the truth not that this man probably wants to hear but the truth that he needs to hear.

[26 : 54] Don't think that you can play games with God. don't think that you can now take God's grace and go and live however you want and who cares about him and what he has said, what he has commanded, what he says is right and wrong.

Jesus doesn't treat this man as just a helpless victim of his circumstances who because of all that he's been through has these ways that he's acting out in these behaviors but he's not really guilty.

He's had a tough past. No, Jesus basically treats it. You're responsible for your own actions, for how you're living and you must turn away from sin.

You must stop sinning or else something worse may happen to you. I think we should hear in that not an empty threat but a serious word of warning from God.

God. It's here that I think this passage there's more than one place but especially speaks to us today.

[28 : 09] I felt challenged by this myself. Do I take God's grace for granted? Am I happy to accept the good gifts of God God?

But not so eager or excited to obey the commands that he has given to do what he has told me is right and to not do what he has told me is wrong?

Do we take God's grace for granted? We'll see this throughout the gospel of John. God's grace and his truth come to us together.

When Jesus speaks both are there grace and truth. Wonderful words of life but also words that bring conviction of sin.

And it's easy to want the one. But we are to accept God's gift of grace by faith by believing in his son and also accept his words of warning and his words which bring conviction of sin.

[29 : 27] Jesus is not just here to tell us the good news of what God has done for us and what he will do for us. He is also here to recalibrate our hearts and our thinking back to a proper reverence and fear of God as we should have.

I'm reminded of those words spoken through the prophet Isaiah about Jesus. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit.

The spirit of the Lord will rest on him and it goes on and then it comes down and says in verse 3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

Oh we see that here. We see that Jesus is saying something which should strike fear into the heart of this man.

A good, a right, a proper fear. Stop sinning. you've been made well. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. Grace and truth.

[30 : 43] And so I just want to leave us with that question and encourage us to reflect and to ask the Lord, what are those places in my life, ways, behaviors, habits, patterns, attitudes, perhaps where I've been taking your grace for granted, where I've been thinking of those things, those that I know are sin or wrong as, oh they're no big deal.

I'm good, I'm a Christian, I believe in Jesus, I'll have your favor, but don't tell me that I need to change.

Of course it's only the Lord who can really show each one of us in our hearts, in our lives, what those things are, but I'd encourage you this week to take time to pray about that, to think about that.

Do we realize just who Jesus is? Do you know that Jesus has come, not just to fix your immediate problems, but to make you well in the ultimate sense, to give you life, to bring you back into a right and proper, good kind of fear, love relationship with God, the God who made you, and who loves you?

Do you believe that he is the son of God? I hope you do, and I hope that you will hear his words and respond to them in whatever ways he leads you to today and in the week ahead.

[32 : 34] Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you so much for these words. They are serious words, but they are words of life.

They are words of grace, and we need them. Lord, we ask that you would convict us of our sin again.

Remind us of those ways where we have blown it. But even as we pray that, we thank you that you sent your son to be the atoning sacrifice, the lamb that we needed so that we could be forgiven and cleansed of all of our sins against you once and for all.

And so it's with joy that we ask you to do your good work of cleansing, of searching, of exposing in our hearts. And we thank you that one day we will be made perfect.

perfect. And we will receive the gift of life, those of us who believe in your name. We say all this in Jesus' name.

[33 : 56] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.