

Healing the Paralytic

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[0:00] Okay, we're going to try something here. I've got... I told Mark back there that I was going to try to figure out how to make the slides work. So good luck, right? Here we go.

I actually got a copy of them so I know where we're at. And boy, it doesn't mean anything. Let's pray. Lord, we ask You to lead us in this discussion.

This is a long chapter and it's a big story and it's pretty important. And I just ask You to give clarity. It's a big story to me and understanding to all of us that we'll get what Your message is for us today. We thank You that You are a God of love and mercy and grace. That we are alive because of You. And in this chapter, You tell us You have life in You. Because the Father gave it to You to give. And we thank You. You share so generously with us. In Your name. Amen. Alright. What you're going to need to do, because that looks great. It looks great.

[0:59] Well, I bet you the next one won't look so great because it's going to be smaller. So open up a Bible. Just find a Bible. Open up to chapter 5 of John. The Gospel of John. While you're doing that, I'll just tell you, Matt sent out to all the guys that preached and said, Now I understand that the Scriptures you've got to cover are really broad.

It's a lot of stuff. And you can't possibly cover it all. And then he said, So don't try. And I looked at mine and it's all one story and it's a whole chapter. And I'm going, Well, good luck with that.

Let's see what we got. It is a lot to cover. We're going to focus on the last two-thirds of this. I mean, the whole point of the sermon is the last two-thirds of the story that's in there.

The first third is sort of, I think, a setup by Jesus. And it's one of those stories that you look at it and you go, I don't understand why it's there. Why would he do what he did to this particular man? And you're going to find out what I'm talking about here in a short minute. But he comes up. There's a place in Jerusalem. It was near the Sheep's Gate. By the way, the Sheep's Gate is important. And most of us go, I don't know anything about Jerusalem's city walls.

[2:09] But the Sheep's Gate was where the sheep were brought in that went to the sacrificial system up at the temple. And so most of the Jewish people avoided that gate like the plague.

It was not a, you can imagine, a million sheep go through their year. It's not going to be a friendly place to walk. And so right near the Sheep's Gate, now Jesus goes there, by the way, and that's an important, sort of an image.

He is the what? The Lamb of God. The Sheep's Gate's how he would come in. I mean, he's the Lamb of God. Anyway, near there, there was these pools.

Now, I saw Glenn sliding. It had a picture of a pool and it was circular. Well, the pool, they can't agree on the name because it got transliterated from the Aramaic and the Hebrew into Greek and into this and that and everything else.

And so you'll get Bethsaida, Bethesda, Bethsatha, depending on how they translated it or rewrote it. But there was this pool and it was actually two of them, but the big one was trapezoidal.

[3:19] So it was wider at the back than it was in the front. And it had five colonnades. Now, they're covered. They're like porticos going around it. And I go, how do you do five on a trapezoidal?

A trapezoidal had four sides. I mean, even I understand that. And then I read it. Oh, one of them went down the middle of it. So that's the fifth one. And here, this whole place is where this story initially takes place.

So let's look at the first line. There you go. And we're going to read John, the first six verses. John 5. And after this, there was a Jewish feast.

And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five covered walkways.

A great number of sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed people were lying in these walkways. Now, a man was there who had been disabled for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and when he realized that the man had been disabled for a long time already, he said to him, do you want to be well?

[4:27] All right. Start back at the beginning. It says a Jewish feast, so it's probably not the Jewish feast, which had been the Passover. And scholars have sort of narrowed this down, based on the context of this story, that it was Pentecost.

And the reason it's Pentecost is that it was celebrated the giving of the law. Moses getting the law and giving it to the people. And that shows up at the very end of this chapter.

So, this is sort of this setting. Jesus never wastes the festival. At the Festival of Lights, he said, I am the light of the world. And he never wasted one of these as a visual.

And so, here you have this Jewish feast. It's probably Pentecost. It's all about the law and Moses giving the law. And Jesus is going to have this conversation later on because of this situation.

It says in verse 6 that Jesus saw a man lying there and realized, in my translation, the Greek word is knew. And knew that he had been disabled for a long time.

[5:38] Now, as soon as you get that word knew, you should go, ding, ding, end of chapter 2. Jesus knew what? The hearts of all men. So, he looked at this man and he knew him.

He knew his situation without even having to ask. He'd been disabled for a long time, 38 years. And he's been there. He also knows something that we're going to find out later.

And then we're going to go, why did he pick this man? And he asked him a question. Do you want to become well? Now, what would you, if I asked, he'd say, Stephen, you were disabled.

And you've been laying around all the time. And Jordan's kicked you out of the house. He said, go down there and see if you can get that water. I'm tired of you laying around the house. And you're laying there and you've been there. And you go, gee, this has been a long, long time.

And I walked up to you and I said, do you want to become well? What are you going to say? Yes. Yeah. Yeah. I've been here 38 years waiting for that. Why? Where have you been? Right? Well, guess what?

[6:44] Let's go to the next slide. The man never answers the question. Instead, he gives an excuse. Sir, I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up.

Well, I'm trying to get in the water. Someone else goes down before me. You see, here's the problem. The idea was, the thinking was, the belief was, by these people and why they're there is, the angel would come down from heaven periodically and stir the water.

And whoever got in the water first would get healed. Now, there's a paradox here. This man says, I couldn't get into the pool. I was sort of thinking, that's an excuse.

I mean, if I knew that that, I had to get in, if I really believed that, I would have had my legs dangling in the water as paralyzed as I am, so all I had to do was just lean over and fall in. But that's not what he's doing.

He's laying on his mat. Now, of course, if I did that, I'd probably drown, and I wouldn't have to worry about it anymore. But the other thing is, how many of you think that really happens, that people actually got healed that way?

[7:59] Not likely, is it? Yet this man had been paralyzed for 38 years. He's been probably at this pool for many years, and he's seen other people get in the water and get out with nothing changed except they're wet.

They got a bath. And yet, he says, I can't get in because nobody will help me. It doesn't answer the question. Jesus then just turns to him and says, stand up, pick up your mat, and walk.

Now, knowing this man's mentality, I have no clue why he did this, why he obeyed him.

But think about this. 38 years you haven't walked, you've been laying on a mat, what do your legs look like? What does your personal strength look like? It doesn't look good.

But this man does that. He picks up, he stands up, he picks up his mat, and he walks. And guess what he does next?

[9:08] He keeps on walking. He doesn't turn back. He doesn't say thank you. He doesn't say, oh my God. Thank you. You must be the Messiah.

He doesn't say anything. He just leaves. Not grateful, apparently. Not amazed. Not overwhelmed with, oh my, wonder.

He just leaves. I'm going, Jesus, why did you pick this man? There's nothing. He doesn't say, like all the other people, I mean, he doesn't show any faith at all, other than he stood up and walked away. Why did you pick him? Now, the other key fact here is, we're going to find out, next slide, is it's the Sabbath.

What's supposed to not happen on the Sabbath? No work. No work. Now, if you read the law about what was not allowed, it's a lot different than what the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders were practicing.

[10:17] Shortly after this guy walks out, he encounters some Jewish leaders. And they tell him, they see him, and I have a good feeling they know who he is because they're in the area.

They know he's been laying there for 38 years, paralyzed, and then they see him walking up with him, carrying his mat, and this is what they say. Now, you think about this. This is what they say. It is the Sabbath, and you're not permitted to carry your mat. But he answered him, the man who made me well says to me, pick up your mat and walk.

And they asked him, who is the man who said this to you? Pick up your mat and walk. But the man who had been healed did not know for who it was, for Jesus had slipped out since there was a crowd in that place.

Now, back when Jesus told him to get up and walk, he didn't know who Jesus was. That in itself is amazing that he listened to him.

[11:22] But here, what's the first thing? He goes in and runs in. What do they focus on? They're just not as amazed either, are they? They're not going, oh, wow, look at that.

He can walk. What happened? It's a miracle. They go, what in the world are you doing walking with your mat in your arm? And I go, I'm just doing what I'm told.

He told me to pick it up. I did. Later, Jesus meets a man at the temple.

Now, I don't know if that means in the temple or near the temple, but it says at the temple. This is what it says. After this, Jesus found him at the temple. And I think he went looking for him.

I mean, he didn't look, but he knew he'd be there and that's what he went there to encounter him. And he said to him, look, you have become well. Don't sin anymore lest anything worse happen to you.

[12:22] And the man went away and informed the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Now, in this case, you remember another time Jesus and the disciples were, they'd come across someone that was disabled and the disciples asked, who sinned, the parents or the man?

And Jesus said, none of them sinned. This was so that God could be glorified. Here, Jesus says, don't sin anymore. There must have been sin in his life.

Of course, there is sin in his life, but in this context, lest anything worse happen to you. So maybe this guy's paralysis, or being paralyzed, is actually a result of something he did sinful.

I don't know. But he makes the connection, don't sin again because something worse could happen to you. And what does the man do? He didn't say, okay.

He says, nothing, and he walks away, and what does he do immediately? He goes back to the Lucians. Oh, by the way, I know who it was. It's Jesus. It was Jesus.

[13:31] Betrayed him, basically. Turned him in. You want to know who it was? It was Jesus. He's the one that's guilty of telling me to do that stuff. Again, you wonder, why did he choose this man?

Now, I don't think Jesus was surprised at all by this man's actions. In fact, he probably chose him for that very reason that he knew he would act that way. But what about the Jewish leaders?

I mean, their reaction is, you go, what? And I think it's worse than we think, maybe. Do you remember Nicodemus? Nicodemus said this when Jesus talked to him.

He says, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one can perform the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.

You notice he said, we. Now, who's the we that Nicodemus is talking about? The Pharisees and the Jewish leaders. He's part of the Sanhedrin. He's part of that and those Jewish leaders.

[14:43] And so, here you've got Jewish leaders coming to this man and saying, what are you doing? They know exactly when he says it's Jesus. They know exactly who this is and what he's done.

Again, though, what do they focus on? They know God's with him. They know God is working through him that God through him healed this man. But what do they go? Not important.

Let's ignore that because that's an uncomfortable thing. We don't want to talk about that. Let's talk about what we do know. We know the law. Do you know that's not allowed?

And this sets up what I think at the end of that chapter that John really wants us to get. Because Jesus is now. You remember back when you talked to the woman at the well?

I'm sort of jumping ahead, Mark, so be careful. What did Jesus say at the end of that conversation? We heard that the Messiah was coming to you and tell us about everything.

[15:46] What did Jesus say? I am he or I am. So he revealed to her, a Samaritan, that he was the Messiah and he called himself God.

Now Jesus is talking to the Jewish leaders and guess what the conversation is going to be about? Him being the Messiah, the Son of God. Over here, when he talked to the Samaritan woman, he didn't get into all the theology because she wasn't able to, she wouldn't know what to do with it.

I mean, have you ever had someone present the Gospel to you and they give you all this theological stuff and they run you through 66 books of the Bible and they take you around this wonderful trip and they get there and you go, I have no idea what you're talking about.

Some people, you just say, Jesus came, died for your sins and is offering you a chance to live a new life and to me, that was the Gospel I heard.

I don't know what else they told me but that's what I heard and that's what I accepted and it's been a wild ride since. Now to some people, I know, very smart people that need theology.

[16:58] And so Jesus is going to these Pharisees and say, here's the theology. Listen carefully. Alright. So, that should get us to the next slide.

Here we go. It's working, Mark. Here's how Jesus starts. He says, I mean, they confront Jesus and say, don't you know?

And He says, so He told them, my Father is working until now and I too am working. And to us, we go, okay, that's sort of a, what, esoteric, vague kind of thing out there.

I get, you said that, I understand that but I don't have a clue why it applies to the situation. The Jewish leaders got it right away. There had been a lot of discussion in rabbinic circles over the years about the Sabbath in particular and in particular God's observance of the Sabbath.

Now remember back in Genesis when God created, what did He do on the seventh day? He rested. And then later in Sinai when He gave the law He told the Israelites you will rest on the seventh day because I rested on the seventh day you will observe the Sabbath.

[18:20] No work will be done. Alright? So that's how the Sabbath got set up. God set it up and said you will observe it keep holy the Sabbath. Sabbath. And now the question is God rested on the Sabbath does He do any work?

Well, the rabbis came to the conclusion that there are some things and just like in the law there are some things that have to get done. Like if an animal falls in the ditch you don't say well, Bessie, I'm sorry but you're going to have to stay there until tomorrow.

you are allowed to get the animal out to rescue it. If something bad happened you could take action to correct the situation to save lives or whatever.

And so they said hmm, does God ever work like that? And the answer is they came up with this yes. Women become pregnant on the Sabbath God gives life.

People give birth on the Sabbath God gives a new life in the world. People die on the Sabbath and they're thinking and it could be true that when you die you immediately went to God for judgment so He judges on the Sabbath.

[19:32] So they said well yeah, God does work on the Sabbath. So what they're saying here what Jesus is saying is my Father is working until now that's accepted. They go okay yeah, I understand that.

And I too am working. What's He saying? I'm doing the work of my Father on the Sabbath just like He does.

He's starting to equate Himself in His words with the Father. Now so now they have this issue because He's including healing this man.

as the work of the Father on the Sabbath and that's why it's legal for Him to do that. Let's look at the next slide. There's a long slide.

Oh, He did cut off the bottom. Alright. So Jesus answered them because they challenged Him. I tell you the solemn truth. The Son can do nothing of His own initiative but only what He sees the Father doing.

[20:44] For whatever the Father does the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He does and will show Him greater deeds than these so that you will be amazed.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life so also the Son gives life to whomever He wishes. Furthermore, the Father does not judge anyone but has assigned all judgment to the Son so that all people honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

And the one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Now He's making some very strong important points that demonstrate His relationship to the Father.

One, He does not do anything on His own. He only does what He sees the Father doing. The Father loves Him and shows Him everything that He's doing.

The Father raises up the dead and gives them life. The Son gives life to whomever He chooses. Now, when you say that, who has the power of life and death?

[21:58] Only God. Jesus is saying the Father does have that power. I have been given that power. Now, what does He just say?

I'm God. I'm God. He goes further and digs the hole deeper, if you want to call it that.

He says, the Father doesn't judge anybody. Did you know that in this Gospel so far, Jesus says, I didn't come to condemn the world. Why?

Because the world already stands condemned. He says, I came to save. Here, He says, the Father doesn't judge, but the Son has been given judgment.

In the Jewish eyes of thinking, who has the power of judgment? God. God. And what does Jesus say? God gave it to me because I am His Son.

[22:57] He and I are one. Then He goes into honor.

The Jews were all about honoring God. Now, the word honor is the same idea of glory. You give glory to God. You honor God. And He says that people are also going to honor the Son because it gets to the point where the Father's honor is His honor.

And He says, if you don't honor the Son, you aren't honoring the Father. There's a reciprocal relationship there. That they are united in everything.

Next slide. He says, I tell you the solemn truth. The one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned.

and has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the solemn truth. That time is coming and is now here when the dead will hear His voice, hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

[24:13] So He says, and I like this, He says, whoever hears my message and believes who? The one who sent Him. He's saying, God sent me, God gave me the message, God is the one who's performing the miracles through me.

You believe what I say, that He's the one. You believe in Him, you believe what He says about me, you're going to have crossed into life.

When the dead will hear His voice. Who are the dead? Are we talking about the literal dead?

Spiritual dead. in all life. He will talk about the real dead later, but He says, when the dead hear the

voice of the Son of God, so when those who are spiritually dead, who do not know God, who do not have a relationship with Him, hear Him, hear Jesus, and understand what He's calling them to, and listen and obey, they will live.

Why? Because He has the power to give life. Life is in Him. I've got one theologian I'm studying and he says Jesus is eternal life.

Think about that. Jesus is eternal life. Remember he said, I am the life. So that guy isn't wrong in that sense.

[25:40] Jesus is the way to eternal life. In fact, Jesus says down a little bit further, for just as the Father has life in Him, He thus granted the Son to have life in Himself. He spells it out in detail.

Remember when he told the woman at the well, and I already alluded to that, he said, I, the one speaking to you, am. I am. I'm God. These Jewish leaders needed to know that He was the Messiah, and He's going to go into great detail for their sake, so that they can understand He is in fact the Messiah.

God, come in the flesh, and to show that His case is legit. Then He gives them testimony now here that's really important. I have a note.

I sort of put this on this morning. Remember this, Christ meets every individual person where they are. The Samaritan woman at the well needed to know who He said He was, the I am, and that she had encountered Him and put her faith in Him.

That's all she needed to know. These guys need to know a lot more. When you became a Christian, what did you need to know?

[27:05] What did Christ reveal to you, through the Spirit, that convinced you that He was who He said He was? And He was giving you what you needed in life, forgiveness, a new start, rebirth.

What was it? Think about that. What was it that you latched on to when you heard? That's what I need. That's what I need.

And I bet you there's not a single one in here that needed a theological discourse on the Messiahship of Christ. You needed something that fit your situation and met you right where you were.

These guys need more. So He's going to give them testimony of others to verify what He's saying is true. Now, under Jewish law, it took two or three witnesses and you couldn't be yourself to verify the facts or truth of some case.

And Jesus even says that you won't accept my testimony and I'm not going to give it to you. He tells them, He says, I know you've already gone to John the Baptist.

[28:16] He says, I already know you've done that. To ask them, who is this guy? Now, John knows that Jesus is the Messiah. He has come to that conclusion because he says, behold, the Lamb of God has come.

He knows. So, I'm sure He told them, yeah, He's in. And they're going, oh, this is not good. This is not good at all. Next slide. But Jesus says, I have testimony that's greater than John.

The reason He said, I don't need to depend on people to testify. John is one of my witnesses, but I have greater witnesses than that. And He says, I have testimony greater than that from John.

for the deeds that the Father assigned me to complete, the deeds that I am now doing testify about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has Himself testified about me.

So, who is this big witness? God. Now, you've got to go back to Nicodemus. What did he say? We know you are from God because only those, the person with God could do the things.

[29:23] So, he's saying, look at my deeds. You already know God's involved in that, that I am from God. God is testifying through the things you see me doing that I am who I say I am.

The problem is, they don't want to see Him for who He is. Because that would somehow undo everything they built their lives around.

And they're not willing to give that up. Maybe it's sort of like this. You remember when Jesus said it's harder for a rich man to get saved?

It's like going nearly impossible for a rich man. Why? Because a rich man has to give up everything in a sense. He has to forego everything to humble himself before God said, yeah, you're all I need.

All this other stuff is just trash. These guys are theologians. What have they built their whole lives on? They've built their whole lives on this system of belief that they've invested everything in. [30:39] Every day is filled with it. And he's saying, it's all useless guys unless it comes to the points to me. And they're going, we're not going there.

We're not going there. next slide. Then he adds another witness. He says, you study the scriptures thoroughly because you think in them you possess eternal life.

And it is these same scriptures that testify about me. But you're not willing to come to me so that you may have life. These guys had memorized multiple books of the Old Testament.

that's what they did. They studied the Old Testament and they debated it and discussed it and they did this and they did that and they were all into the minutia of it.

Sort of like my Sunday school class some days. You know, you get in there and you go, oh, he's doing it again. They were really invested in it. In fact, they wanted to know and understand everything in there.

[31:40] So that, as he says, they thought that was going to give them eternal life. We'd make them righteous people. But they missed what the Scriptures were all about. The Scriptures all testify from Genesis on of the Christ Jesus.

In fact, Genesis, Adam and Eve fall, what is one thing God says right up front? Yeah, I'm sending one and he will crush Satan's head.

Right in the very beginning, we have a promise of a Savior. Someone who's going to come and overturn all the evil that has now entered the world. You go to Moses, and what did Moses say in his last speech before he died?

He said, one, another prophet will come greater than me. He's speaking of Christ. If these guys had really studied Scripture and understood what they were reading, they would have said, we're looking for a Messiah and not the one they got.

They would have said, look at this. Here's a man, obviously from God, doing great things in power of God, and he's teaching us about, hey, this must be the one. That's what the woman at the well said.

[33:01] We know that there is a Messiah coming. And he said, I'm it. And she said, oh my goodness, let me go tell the village. These guys say, they don't say, let's go tell the village, they say, let's kill him.

Next slide. Then he brings up Moses. Again, remember the context. The law in Moses is celebrated at this feast. Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the Father.

The one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. If you believe Moses, you would believe me because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what Moses wrote, how would you believe my words?

So all the witnesses speak against them and testify of Jesus being who he says he is, the Son of God. Scripture, Moses, the deeds he does, and if you need a man, you've got John the Baptist. And it would be Moses who would stand and accuse them on judgment day. The one that they had put all their effort into trying to follow. Missing the entire point of Scripture.

[34:28] Well, that brings us to the question. Do we too miss him in all of our religious activity? You and I know that it's very possible to be religious and unsaved.

I mean, there are churches out there, some Christians, some not, that are filled with people who are very religious, religious, but they don't know Jesus.

And I think that we need to take this to heart and think about it. And I'm going to tell you right now, I'm 77 years old, I think more on this than I have ever thought of it in my life.

Why? I'm getting closer to being standing there and hearing the answer. And I'm praying, Lord, be merciful.

Let it be yes. Even if it's a squeaky Bible, yes. Do we see Him in us and working around us?

[35:42] Are we following Him or doing our own thing? Are we honoring Him or seeking the honor for ourselves?

are we dying to self so that we can be alive to Him or are we living to get the best life we can now? Which boils down to where is our treasure?

Are we grateful for all the blessings He gives us or are we living expecting Him to give us what we want? Where are our hearts?

who is our King and Lord or is He just our Savior? I think that's what we need to extract from this and realize that He's more.

Let's pray. Lord, I just thank You for Your grace. Lord, without Your grace I would be lost, confused, and wandering hopelessly. But by grace You brought me into a relationship with You.

[36:50] I just pray that I am listening and heeding and being obedient to You. And I pray that all of us would allow You to reign in our hearts, to rule our lives and to be our God and our Savior and our Lord and our King with the anticipation of being in Your kingdom forever and ever and ever.

That one day we'll all dance before You like David. That we'll all fall down and worship You. that we'll all serve You fully and completely because we understood what You told us.

I thank You for Your love and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.