

# John 5:1-18

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Robert Buttermore

[0:00] All right, good morning, everyone. So this morning we're continuing our series through John.! We're in John chapter 5 now.! God, let us hear from your word this morning.

Let us hear your voice and be in awe that we get to hear from you, that we hear about your beautiful Son. Word of God, speak to us this morning, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, John 5, 1 through 18. All right, after this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, an Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed.

One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years. 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?

[1:25] 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'm going down, another steps down before me.

Jesus said to him, Get up. Take up your bed and walk. And at once the man was healed. He took up his bed and he walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.

But he answered them, The man who healed me, that man said to me, Take up your bed and walk. So they asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk?

Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was. For Jesus hadn't withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, See, you are well.

[2:30] Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this is why the Jews were persecuting Jesus.

Because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My father is working until now, and I am working.

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 to God.

So this morning we are going to break the sermon into two parts. The first part is verses 1-9. This is the healing in the pools of Bethesda.

And in verses 10-18, we are going to look at the reaction and the rules. So we have the pools and we have the rules. So what is going on here now? So Jesus is traveling, as many Jews did, for a feast in Jerusalem.

[3:33] Can you pop up the next one? So he is traveling to Jerusalem from wherever he was. And then as Jesus is traveling through the city, he stops.

And he stops at these pools where a multitude of invalids are laying. And it says these invalids are paralyzed, they're lame, they're blind.

These are the kind of sicknesses where you can't be healed quickly from these. Modern medicine isn't taking care of these people. These people are sitting here waiting for this pool to heal them.

The water somehow gets stirred up and the first one in gets healed or it's thought to be healed. But Jesus here focuses on this one man who's been paralyzed for 38 years.

And scripture here says that Jesus sees him, right? In verse 6, Jesus saw him lying there and he knew that he had already been there a long time. So he walks up to him and now he starts speaking to him.

[4:36] So, so far Jesus sees him, he walks to him, and he speaks to him. So we see Jesus, the person, focusing on this other person.

I think through the song, The Mighty Fortress is Our God. And that's a strong song, shows us how strong he is. But in this verse 6 here, we see this personal Jesus also. He's the lion and the lamb. And I think about this man who's been an invalid, paralyzed for 38 years. How many people have walked by him, never making eye contact, right?

Never sharing a word with him. How lonely he must have felt. And I'm sure there's someone here who's lonely, who's hurt, who's sick. And we want to share the news. Shoreline wants to share the news.

God loves you. And this is not just a platitude. We will see later how that's true. But let's dig into Jesus' words to the man. Jesus, oh, sorry, go back.

[5:40] Jesus' words to the man are, do you want to be healed? Right? What an obvious question. And what's the man's reaction? It's desperate, right? He says, sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up.

And when I'm going down, another steps in before me. This man is desperate, right? He tries. He drags his limp body towards the water to be healed, but to no avail.

He thinks this pool is going to make him whole. Yet he has no idea the Lord of the universe is right next to him. And a side note, if you're reading the ESV or NIV, the end of verse 3 and verse 4, there's some added verses there.

And the ESV has a footnote. It discusses them. Those verses are not in the early manuscripts. They're thought to be added marginal texts that were included later in Scripture.

And as translators have gone through all the old manuscripts, they realize that these are not actually part of the real text. So just for clarity, that's there. If these words are added or removed, it doesn't change how the story is.

[6:51] It doesn't change the book of John. And it doesn't change Scripture. But it's just one of those little notes in there. But let's jump back to the story. So this man here is for 38 years. He's waiting and he's hoping.

And then Jesus speaks. He says three things, right? He says, get up, take up your bed, and walk. And what happens?

Instantly, the man is healed. Contrast the human effort of dragging your limp body down to this water over and over and at failing.

And contrasting how easy it was for the Lord to speak and to heal this man. This man doesn't go through any physical therapy. Scripture doesn't talk about any atrophy of his legs.

But it says he gets up and he walks. The healing is complete for his body. Quite amazing. And then the first section, verse 9, ends with, Now this day was the Sabbath.

[7:56] It's an odd way to end a healing. But it's a foretaste of what's to come. So a sub-point here. Not the main point. How do we see Jesus moving through his ministry?

Is he moving from comfort to comfort? Or is he moving from comfort into need? Right? On Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation of our Lord.

Right? He was sitting at the right hand of the Father. Royalty. Sitting on his throne. And he moved towards a need. He saw the greatest need that we had. So he took on flesh and decided to come alongside us.

To live a perfect life for us. He moved into need. When he's traveling, right? He went through Samaria. A couple weeks ago, we discussed this. He didn't go the way normal Jewish people would go.

He went through Samaria because he knew ministry there. He knew there was broken-hearted sinners who he needed to share his good news with. And in here, we see him moving towards the need of this man who's paralyzed.

[8:59] He is, he could have, like anyone else, could have passed by this man and ignored him. But he chose to move into need. And not just physical needs.

We're going to see later, he also cares about spiritual needs. And how does he do this? Right? Jesus said earlier, and he's going to say it later, the food of the Lord is to do the will of his father. He is so utterly satisfied in his relationship with his father that he can put aside comfort and conflict and move towards people in a way that makes them whole.

And we, as little Christ, right, as Christians or little Christ, we're called to do the same thing. In our new life, in our union with Christ, we can follow his pattern.

Right? He has given us the power. We read in Acts. He poured out the Holy Spirit. We now have the Spirit. So we're not just following the pattern, right? The Bible is not just a blueprint for us to follow. But he's empowered us to follow that pattern and to show Christ to the world when they don't see him.

[10:07] And a reminder, we might not be able to heal like Jesus heals with his words here. But we can move towards physical needs in the same way.

And both physical and spiritual needs. Right? When Shoreline has a birth or something's going on in somebody's life, we are so good. This is such a good thing. We're so good at bringing a meal to somebody.

But if we neglect the spiritual side of a person, we have ignored part of what God has created. People aren't just created physical. They're also created spiritual. So ensure that you're serving the physical and the spiritual needs of people.

All right. Second section here. We're going to go into the rules. Right? We did the pools. Now we're going into the rules. This is the reaction to the healing in verses 10 through 18. So we get into the Sabbath discussion now that we just talked about.

So now we have new characters enter the scene. And John says the Jews here. When Kent talked to us earlier, when John in the Gospel of John talks about Jews, he's talking about the religious leaders or authorities.

[11:16] There's a whole bunch of Jewish people moving into Jerusalem for the feast. But he's not talking about all of them. He's talking about just a specific group of people. And what are the religious authorities' first words to the healed man?

It is a Sabbath. And it is not lawful for you to take up your bed. What don't they say? They don't say, wow, you're healed.

We've walked by this man so many times. They don't say, praise the Lord. They don't say, how did that happen? Or who did it to you? They say, it is a Sabbath. And it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.

They're utterly blind. And you guys may have heard the saying, when you have a hammer, everything becomes a nail. I have a three-year-old, Torrin. When he has a hammer, everything becomes a nail.

And the same thing here, right? They're carrying this law and they're applying it everywhere they see. There is no grace. There is no understanding and wonder of what's going on. So they're bringing up the Sabbath here.

[12:17] So let's get a little background on the Sabbath. In Genesis, we see God creating the world in six days. And on the seventh day, God stops and he rests.

Right? And as image bearers of Christ, we're called to do the same thing. And on that seventh day of rest, we trust that he will provide. We put down our tools.

We put down our jobs. And we trust that he will provide for us that day. He will allow us to do in six days what's needed to provide on the seventh.

And then in Exodus, after, we see the Sabbath talked about again. And God wants to remind us that he's a redeemer. So after the Exodus from slavery in Egypt, God sets it aside and says, that seventh day is a day of rest from labor.

Remember the labor that the Egyptians forced you to do, to do all their work. And he says, this Sabbath day is a day to think backwards onto what I did, to release you and give you rest.

[13:23] Our minds are so bent towards forgetting this. So God has set up one in seven days to remind us of these things. We need these patterns in our lives.

It's not a, right? The seven-day calendar is not a mistake. It's how God created it. And if we read the Old Testament prophets again, they often talk about rest in a way that looks towards a future, never-ending, perfect rest.

He wants to give us a taste now on the Sabbath, what's in store for his people in the new heavens and the new earth. So with all that background on what the Sabbath is, the charge these Jewish religious leaders are bringing against this man, it has nothing to do with carrying your mat. So what are they talking about here? I went through the Old Testament, couldn't find anything about carrying your mat, right? It talks about stop working. So what they're talking about here is a document called the Mishnah.

So after the Babylonian exile, right, they were released from captivity. There was a bunch of questions coming in. The rabbis had to do teaching over and over.

[14:33] So they wrote this document. And it was all these extra scriptural references on how to live. Somebody comes in and says, hey, is this work or not work? That's not work. But that's work.

But that's not work. So they wrote down, and there was 39 categories of things that were work and things that were not work. So what these religious leaders are referencing are in there.

It says, you shall not carry anything for your job, right? But these religious leaders are so meticulous on how they follow this. This man's not carrying his mat for his job.

He's simply carrying it. But they, once again, are applying the hammer of the law and say, stop.

That's against the law. So, the Jewish leaders here are getting their right standing before the Lord from their law keeping, their law abiding, and their law application, right?

And we often do the same thing. Sometimes we can be like the man waiting at the pool. We say to ourselves, if only I felt blank, then I would be whole again.

[15:37] If only I saw blank, then I would have no need. I would be fully satisfied. Or like these Jewish leaders. They work for the rules.

They set up these systems, these procedures. They're meticulous. They try hard. Every day is the same, right? These are the planning type people. They say, now we're a whole person.

But both of these are dead ends. I have tried both of them. They seem opposite, but there's times when we try both. And it's a dead end. We'll talk more about that.

But let's get back to the story. So, how does the man defend himself from the charge that comes in?

He defends himself by not talking about the Sabbath at all. But he says, the man who healed me, that man said to me, take up your bed and walk.

So, he starts pointing fingers. Look, it's him. Oh, but Jesus is not there. Yeah.

[16:37] So, verse 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. So, Jesus healed the man and then disappeared.

So, this man is now taking heat from the religious authorities. But Jesus does not leave him there. Right? And the Jews are asking, hey, who is he?

But this man has no idea. When we look back at the healing, Jesus never said, I am the Lord. He never said, I am Jesus. He never said all these things. He simply said, get up, take your bed, and walk.

Nothing else. So, afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you are well.

Right? He's talking about the physical body.

But he says, sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. So, he follows up his healing now with a spiritual and a moral challenge.

[17:34] He says, you've been given this gift, but don't miss the point. He says, something worse than 38 years of suffering is possible.

He says, stop sinning in a way that disregards the Lord. Right? He's not talking about being perfect. Christ is mine forevermore, that song we just sang, is a beautiful, beautiful song. I think the first two verses I was thinking through as we were going through it, right? It says, I forsake the things that I should treasure, and I go after other things.

But the song talks about repentance and coming before the Lord. That's what Jesus is talking about here. He says, sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. And this is a challenge for us. Are we faithful stewards of the gifts that have been given to us?

Do we have certain things in our lives that the Lord has saved us from? Like this man, are we not in awe before the Lord?

[18:40] Are we marveling and wonder at the grace that he has shown towards us? Or are we distracted?

Are we saying blah, blah, blah? Are we saying this is not a big deal? Is there no praise going on in our hearts? Are we inwardly focused?

Take this warning. It is serious. Jesus is not playing around. The gift giver here, right? The Lord who just healed him is saying is not to be taken lightly.

He carries great authority, right? He carries wrath for those who reject him. Don't reject his call and don't reject his challenge to live as a changed person.

If he has changed you, live as a changed person. So what's the healed man's next move? What does he do? The healed man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

[19:45] Another odd turn of events. He doesn't fall at Jesus' feet. His reaction is nothing like the woman in Samaria.

He doesn't say, come and see this man. Come and see the man who told me everything I've ever done. That's not his thing. What does he do? He's not on his knees.

He's not praising. He goes and he tattles on the Lord. He says, I know you're looking for him. I found him and here he is.

And Jesus being the God man is not shocked by this, right? His ministry towards people takes priority over conflict. If he knows ministering and healing and challenging somebody is going to bring conflict into his life, he does not shy away from that.

This man and the spiritual challenge is more important than any comfort or need that he has. Persecution, right? Now the Jews are after him.

[20:49] It's not something that makes him change his direction of travel. He is still heading towards the cross. Then we get to verses 17 and 18 and we see the depth change.

But Jesus answered them, My father is working until now and I am working. What does he mean by this? So there's a debate in the early couple centuries before Christ came.

The leading Jewish authorities and the rabbis are saying, we know that in Genesis God says he rested. What does it mean that he rested? Because if God also upholds the universe, that must mean he's working.

And he does that on Sunday. So what's going on here? And the conclusion is that he's the creator and we're the created.

We're the creature. So that creator-creature distinction. And he says, what God does is perfect. He is right. We cannot question what he does. So if he works in a certain way, that's okay.

[21:56] But we are called. We have all this clear teaching on what it means to not work. But here, Jesus is dropping the microphone, right? He's saying, my father is working and I am working.

If he's allowed to work on the Sabbath, then I'm allowed to work on the Sabbath. Right here, he's holding himself as co-equal with the father. So the charge here changes.

They're accusing this man first of working on the Sabbath. Now they're accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath. And we see persecution come in. But now the charge changes. Because Jesus said, what justifies God the father from working is the same thing that justifies me.

They're now charging him with blasphemy. Right? Their charge towards him changes from persecution. And now they're seeking to kill him.

Verse 18. This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Does this threat, this increased threat, sway the direction of travel which he's going?

[23:07] Not at all. He is heading towards this man's healing. And he does not change direction. He is heading towards the cross.

And he does not change direction. Because he has now claimed to be co-equal with the father, what he's done is just increase the velocity towards the same target.

And the same thing eventually, in a worldly way, brings about the end of his life. The next few weeks, we're going to hear from Tyler and from Jordan on the beauty and the depth and get some more clarity on what it means that Jesus is co-equal with the father.

But today, we see that Jesus never shied away from the mission that his father gave him. Right? He set aside his personal safety and his protection.

And in the end, Jesus proves to be the rest that we are all seeking. A rest that never ends. The rest and Sabbath that he provides is one that was bought at a great price.

[24:14] His death was a substitute. Part of his death is a transaction. He takes our sinful record and he gives us his perfect record.

And in that, we no longer have to labor or work or strive towards right standing before the Lord. We have it now as a free gift.

And in today's passage, we see Jesus heading directly towards that. He wants to give us that free gift. He doesn't shy away from his mission. So to start closing, now, how do we do life before the face of God, if this is true?

Maybe we relate to the man at the pool. We need healing. We're lonely. We're broken. And it's been going on for a long time. Those few verses, be encouraged that Jesus sees you just as he sees the man.

Be encouraged that Jesus talks to you. Through his spirit and his word and prayer, he still does that today. And be encouraged that Jesus has not lost any of his power.

[25:24] He can still heal us till this day. But at the same time, if we have placed our faith in him, if we've repented of our sins, he has done something on the cross that will make us way more whole than any physical healing ever, ever will.

Wholeness and life cannot be found in the rules of personal self-improvement. It can't be found in the pools of any mystical experience. Wholeness and life is ultimately found in one place, in Jesus, hearing his voice and responding to his word.

If we take this message mainly today as one of healing, do we also hear the challenge that he's giving us?

The new life you have in Christ is a wonderful thing, but do not let it end there. Hear the challenge and desire to grow your relationship with the Lord.

Grow in the knowledge and the wisdom of the Lord. Set up shop under the fountainheads of grace. What you need, put yourself through there. Be in scripture.

[26:41] Be in prayer. During the Lord's Supper, which you're going to take on here in a few minutes. Right? And be in the church. These things push us towards spiritual maturity.

We have come to him as Savior, but it's also a call for us to come to him as Lord. Do not forget that. And if we hear the message today mostly as a challenging one, do we also see that it's for our own healing.

Our own attempt at rules and self-improvement won't get you anywhere with God. But the challenge today is for your healing.

So we can let down this exhausting self-salvation project we've set up. We can find the rest in the healing voice of Jesus alone. Let me close this in prayer.

Lord, thank you for speaking and renewing our minds. God, help us grasp the heights of your plans for us. God, your truths are unchanged from the dawn of time.

[27:48] And your truths will echo down through all eternity. By grace, Lord. By grace, Lord, help us stand on your promises. And by faith, Lord, help us walk as you walk with us.

God, continue to speak until your church is built and the entire earth is filled with your glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.