

John 5:1-18, Encountering Jesus: Healing at Bethesda, 11/5/17

One year ago at this time I took **this selfie** (picture) at the exact location we will study in John 5 today- The Pool of Bethesda. If you come on the Holy Land Tour with us next October you will see this site with your own eyes. We are going to find out what happens to a man that the world forgot about unexpectedly encounters Jesus.

John 5:1-2

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. ² 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.

Until the 19th century, there was no evidence outside of John's Gospel for the existence of this pool; therefore, some scholars argued that the gospel was written later and isn't reliable. Attempting to discredit the Gospel of John. That was of course until a pool was discovered in an archaeological dig in the 19th century that fit John's description. **(Picture)** And wouldn't you know it, in 1964 further excavation uncovered the ruins of 5 covered colonnades surrounding the pool, just like John described it...after all, he was there to see it with his own eyes! **Lon Solomon- More they dig out of the ground the more the Bible proves to be true!**

John 5:3

³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

We notice that there is no verse 4 in the NIV (ESV or the NASB). But it's there in the old Authorized King James version. **Why is it missing? The answer is that it's not there in the oldest and best manuscripts** that we have discovered over the last 100 years, and was likely added later by scribes attempting to describe what people thought was happening at this pool. Handful of texts like this in Scripture, none of which have any significant bearing. How the pool worked is not essential to the story. The fact that Jesus worked is essential to the story.

John 5:5-9a

⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. [Greek word mean feeble bodied] ⁶ 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?"

⁷ "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." ⁸ Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." ⁹ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

A couple observations-

- From the description of the hundreds around this pool, John focuses the story on just one. **(Picture)** On a routine day, just like all the others, this one hopeless,

forgotten man by the pool has his life completely and unexpectedly changed when he encounters Jesus. It is not by chance that this story is told just one chapter after the woman at the well unexpectedly encounters Jesus. They have much in common. Neither were seeking Jesus, both were outcasts of society, both were looking to something to satisfy and heal them other than Jesus. The woman was drawing water that would never quench her thirst. This man was hoping on “magical waters” to heal him. But Jesus in no uncertain terms shows them both that He himself is the source of all soul-satisfaction, of all healing. He is the Living Water! Amen?

-When Jesus heals, he heals completely. “At once.” Can you imagine trying to walk after 38 years of having no use of your legs? Can you imagine the atrophy? No physical therapy, no leg braces, walkers, crutches...”Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” And that’s what he did! Jesus, God in flesh has authority over anatomy and physiology.

John 5:9b-13

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ”

¹² *So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”*

¹³ *The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.*

John wants you to see the massive contrast between the compassion of Jesus on this one man vs. the callousness of the religious leaders. How do they respond? All they care about is that someone would dare violate their interpretation of the Sabbath law. For the last 38 years they don’t help this man, they don’t reach out to show compassion, he’s forgotten but as soon as he stepped out of line all of sudden they care and notice. How ironic... Some kids in the school system, people on the streets that feel this way. Jesus has choice words for this kind of hypocritical, legalistic leadership.

Matthew 23:24

Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

The gnat? A lifelong crippled man walking with his mat on the Sabbath. The Camel? Failure to love. Ignoring the poor, sick, widow and orphan in their time of need. I wonder if we’ve ever been guilty of straining gnats and swallowing Camels? Have we ever been guilty of getting caught up in arguing over non-essential theological issues, worship preferences...while ignoring the clear commands of loving people. But that’s a sermon for another time...but it’s a good one!

Jesus isn’t done with this man.

John 5:14

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

Text says "found" as if Jesus stumble upon him. That word actually means "to seek out and find." He goes after the one. Jesus had no intention of walking away from this man and leaving him with nothing more than a healed body. No, there's something much bigger at stake than a healed body.

What does he say? "You are well. Sin no more. Stop sinning." "You are physically well, time to get spiritually well." Does this sound familiar? Remember the woman caught in adultery? John 8- after he rescues her from being stoned, he says- "Go and leave your life of sin." See Jesus' aim is more than just physically meeting needs. His aim is the healing of the soul. As much as Jesus is moved to compassion by our physical challenges, he is most concerned with our spiritual wellbeing for eternity! What good is it to gain the whole world and forfeit our souls?

Now this man could turn away from this grace, the gift of Jesus and go back to unbelief and selfishness, old ways and in doing so be healed in this life but loose his life for eternity (and that it what I take it to mean when Jesus says something worse) or he can respond through obedience to following Christ at His word.

We don't know what this man chooses, we never hear from him again. And so I think we are meant to stop thinking about the man, and start thinking about Jesus. It point to him, and our response to the encounter with Jesus.

Story of going to youth group, time of great spiritual need, internal woundedness and dysfunction...Bob seeing the one out of the crowd and wanting to know me and the impact that made on me.

Jesus has Compassion On the One.

There were lots of people at that pool that day that had been dealt a difficult hand in life, and yet the author John wants us to see that Jesus wasn't just concerned with suffering in general (we know at other times people were lining up to be healed by Jesus, large crowds), but he cared about the ONE. V.5- tells the story of just one.

He looks this one in the eyes, he speaks to this one. Jesus cares about this one. Jesus is full of compassion. I counted at least nine times in the gospels where it says Jesus was moved with compassion, and dozens of others, like this one, where it is implied. You can't help but see this over and over again in the Gospels. Just as he went to Samaria and found the one woman at the well in chapter 4, he went to Galilee to find one official who had a sick son at the end of chapter 4. And Jesus tells the story of the shepherd with a 100 sheep who loses one...and says, "that's OK I have plenty of others." NO! and leaves the 99 to go after the ONE.

I think that's what we are supposed to see and feel in this story- Jesus is easily moved not just by the general suffering of humanity, but by your suffering, your needs, your story- you. Just one. God is not hard-hearted and he's softhearted.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Some of us struggle to believe this. We think God has forgotten about us. Or maybe worse, is apathetic toward us. He has compassion toward you and what you may be going through? The suffering in your life? He knows, he feels your pain, his tears fall with you. You aren't alone in your grief, in your exhaustion. In your heartbreak. In your loneliness. He not only has compassion for you. But do you know that he has and will be moved to action?

Hebrews 4:16

¹⁶ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

-He may give you mercy and grace through healing you. He may heal you physically. Ex: Prayer for woman in hospital. Ask if anyone has been healed. He may heal a broken relationship that you thought you'd never heal from. Ask if anyone...He may heal you from an addiction or bad habit that had you in bondage. Ask if anyone...

-He may give you mercy and grace through granting you joy, peace, comfort in the midst of pain.

-Ultimately, he is most concerned about healing us for eternity. We will be healed completely...ministry on earth was just a foretaste of eternity.

In your time of trouble are you going to Jesus Christ confidently to receive mercy and grace? Or are you relying on a "magic pool?" The one who knows you, has compassion on you, and is moved to action on your behalf?

Jesus has Heart-Felt Compassion On the One...and so must we!

1 John 2:6

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Story of Myra, son Matthew and Damien.

Who is YOUR ONE?

Communion.