

Title: The Incident at the Pool
Date: March 17, 2024
Subject: Jesus presents himself as God who gives life.
Scripture: John 5:1 - 47

For the man in the Scripture read earlier, the pool at Bethesda was anything but a house of mercy and grace. He was inclined to agree with those who viewed it as a place of disgrace, filled with people suffering from disease, sickness, illness. He'd been an invalid for 38 years. We can't say for certain, but it seems he'd spent most of that time at the pool. Probably, at first, relatives and friends accompanied him with hopeful expectation. The belief was an angel came and stirred the waters and the first one into the pool would be cured.

As the years passed, the man was left more and more to his own devices to try to get into the pool. He'd crawl, scoot and/or roll, dragging his useless legs. He often didn't make it close to the pool. When he actually got in, he quickly found out someone else had made it before him, as once again, he wasn't healed. The mental and emotional wear and tear increased year after year with one failed attempt after another. It seemed like hope had drained from him.

On this unspecified yet important feast day, the number of disabled people at the pool had increased. They hoped visitors to Jerusalem would wander through the area and give money to the needy. Maybe out of a sense of obligation, thankfulness they weren't like the people at the pool or because they genuinely cared. It didn't matter. Money was money.

This day was unusual because Jesus arrived on the scene. Not that anybody noticed. There was no commotion. Throngs of people didn't try to get his attention so he'd touch them or merely speak and they'd be healed. No one called out his name or approached him.

It doesn't seem like it would have made any difference as the Jesus saw the man. The Greek word means he was staring at the man. It's like there weren't any other people around.

The NIV says Jesus learned of the man's unfortunate condition. Others say he realized it. Still others say he knew intuitively when he saw the man or knew beforehand. The key is he's the one who made the approach. He asked, "Do you want to get well?"

Some might consider that to be a totally insensitive question of somebody who has an obvious need. Of course, the guy wanted to get well. He's there and he'd been there for who knows how long.

This is where conspiracy theorists raise the possibility the guy didn't really want to be healed. There were scammers and con artists who dressed the part of the physically needy. Depending upon how pathetic their appearance and pitiful their moaning, they could make a great deal of money from unwary people. Maybe he'd become one of them, was making good living and his response would be "Hey bud. Leave me alone....."

The man wasn't like so many others who encountered Jesus and begged to be healed or immediately responded "yes" to the Healer's offer. He doesn't say "All things are possible" or "If you will." The man

doesn't sound like a guy who possessed great faith or any faith. He simply launched into his often-told story of profound sadness, mingled with bitterness and the realization that this is the way he'd live out the rest of his life. The way things have been is the way they are and the way they will be.

Jesus may have said more than what's recorded because the Gospels don't contain all the words Jesus said. But in this case? I think Jesus didn't beat around the bush: "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

The man was instantaneously healed. He picked up his mat and walked. Meanwhile, Jesus slipped away into the curious crowd that surrounded the man who'd been healed.

There are lots of questions that go through our minds, at least my mind. Why did Jesus pick this one man when there were so many needy? Why didn't he just give a blanket healing for everyone at the pool when he had previously healed many who were sick and at other times all who came to him?

I think there are a couple reasons why Jesus chose this man. The first involves the man. Their encounter wasn't complete. Later, Jesus found him at the temple. It wasn't a chance meeting - they just happened to bump into each other. Jesus spent a lot of time at the temple as a worshipper and teacher. The man probably went there out of a grateful heart and to praise God. It seems like Jesus was on the lookout. I don't know if you want to picture Jesus casually standing against a wall, chatting with people, but keeping an eye out for the man.

When Jesus found the man, he had a two-part message - an affirmation he was restored to physical health and a warning. When Jesus told the man to stop sinning or something worse may happen, he wasn't connecting the illness with sin. The man needed spiritual healing because spiritual sickness has horrible consequences. These are for people who maintain their sinful lifestyles, don't turn from their sin and don't turn to God. The consequences are far worse because they involve eternal punishment and separation from God.

The miracle also presented the opportunity for Jesus to present truth to the masses.

READ vv. 16 – 24.

A. Jesus declares he has equality with the Father.

The editorial note of v. 18 shows the crowd caught on very quickly. They weren't no dummies. They knew what Jesus was insinuating. The Jews then not only wanted to kill Jesus because he repeatedly broke the Sabbath but because he was "calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God."

The Jews had two options for interpreting Jesus' comments. One, He was claiming he was another God, independent of the God they believed was the one true God. It would challenge their monotheistic views. Two, Jesus was claiming to be the one and only true God. The Jews landed on the second as they correctly understood Jesus wasn't claiming to be an alternative but asserting he was the God they said they believed in.

Jesus claimed he and the Father had a unique relationship. The Father loves him as the Son (v. 20) and he loves the Father. He addressed God as "my Father." Jews wouldn't use that language except during prayer because it implied a too intimate connection. Hearing Jesus talk this way was like fingernails on a chalkboard or the high-pitched screaming of an infant that won't stop. It irritated them and they wanted to cover their ears.

We revel in the idea that God loves us. We bask in John 3:16 and other verses about God's love: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1). "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so."

Jesus' claim to be equal with God is shown in several ways.

1. They're engaged in the same work. 17, 19, 36

The Father sent the Son on the mission to do the work the Father has been doing. The Father shows the Son all that he does. The Son does the same things the Father does. The Father isn't keeping something back because the Son can't handle it or it's too difficult. They're on the same wavelength. Jesus doing the work of the Father is an indication he has been sent by the Father.

2. Jesus is empowered by the Father. 19, 20

He's authorized and enabled by the Father. He's dependent upon the Father. This doesn't mean he's inferior but each of them is working together consistent with their roles.

3. They both have the ability to give life. 21, 25, 28, 29

The Father raises the dead and gives them life. Jesus says he has the same power to raise the dead and give life. The Jews believed that only the God of heaven could give life. They had familiar stories from the Old Testament about God giving life like in the cases of their heroes Elijah or Elisha. The Jews were careful to note that the prophets were merely vehicles God used because only God can give life. They were shocked when Jesus said he could give life.

Read V. 24.

This is one of the themes Jesus wants to stress - people can have eternal life through placing their trust in him. The end of Jesus' teaching to the crowd reverberates with the need to believe (vv. 38-47). The word "believe" is repeated. In addition, the text speaks of people refusing to accept him or come to him. That means people need to accept him and come to him - to believe that he is and is a rewarder of those who seek him.

4. They execute the same judgment. 22, 27, 30

This runs counter to Jewish thought. The Jews believed that the Supreme Being of the universe was the only one who had the right to judge. Since Jesus said what he said, they concluded he was speaking heresy.

Jesus asserts the Father delegated the right and authority to judge to him, the Son. He judges the same way the Father judges because his desire is to please the one who sent him. Jesus will be the one to judge. He will determine who has aligned themselves with the truth and who are the heretical because they haven't personally come to him for salvation.

5. They're both worthy of worship. 23

Jesus said the purpose for the Son exercising judgment was so he would receive the same honor as the Father. Anyone who doesn't honor him doesn't honor the Father. Jesus is to receive the same honor and be worshipped in the same way the Father is worshipped. The Father is praised for being the Creator. Jesus is to

be praised for being Creator. The Father is praised for his attributes. Jesus is to be praised for his divine attributes. The Father is praised for expressing his love. Jesus is to be praised for expressing his love.

6. They both have life in and of themselves. 26

READ V. 26

The Jewish belief was that only God had life in himself. Everything else was created by God and therefore given life. They concluded that since Jesus was walking and talking like a human being that he had to be created and given life by an outside source, namely God...or the devil. Jesus says he is just like the Father and possesses life in and of himself. He's not created. He's not dependent upon anyone else for his existence.

Everything Jesus said made the Jews' stomachs wretch and their heads reel. There was no way on earth Jesus could be who he said he was...unless...he was the Messiah...something of they weren't buying.

B. The crucial matter of believing

This is the second main point Jesus wants to impart. We come back to v. 24. Belief is front and center. Jesus connects himself with the Father as they're involved in the same work of bringing salvation to people. Jesus is present on earth as the Word, the Message, the Spokesperson, the Deliverer. Hearing Jesus is the same as hearing the Father. Believing in the Father is the same as believing in Jesus. Believe means trusting that Jesus is a truthful witness and putting our confidence in him that he is the one and only way to the Father.

Belief has results. The first is the person gains eternal life. Living forever in a perfect place, enjoying the presence of God with no garbage of sin and the devil. That sounds pretty good...fantastic.

The second result is those believe in Jesus won't be condemned. They're free from the threat of punishment. They won't be separated from God. They won't face the eternal consequences for not believing.

The third result is the person who believes has crossed over from death to life. It's like a line drawn in the sand. On one side is death. On the other side is life. Spiritually dead people who cross the line are transformed into being spiritually alive.

Jesus later says to Martha when she was grieving the death of her brother Lazarus: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25, 26).

Jesus presents himself as God in the flesh. He says people need to believe in him in order to have life. He draws the circle of truth even tighter as he directly confronts those who oppose him.

READ vv. 37 - 40

C. The problem and predicament of the deceived

This is the third issue Jesus stressed. He addressed people who thought they had eternal life. He points out that they're sorely mistaken. They haven't experienced love from God and don't love God in return (V. 42).

The attitude of the Pharisees, teachers of law and other religious leaders was demonstrated by the way they observed the command to not say God's personal name in vain. A major focus of honoring the name was to not mispronounce it. His name is taken from when God used "I AM" when he spoke to Moses at the

burning bush. It's represented by the letters YHWH. In English it's LORD. Jews sought to protect themselves by saying Adonai which is Lord meaning master. To remind themselves to say Adonai, they took the vowels from Adonai, inserted them in the consonants of the divine name, YHWH, to form yahowah – which is the English Jehovah. But the Jews still wouldn't say yahowah. And in spelling the English word God, it's "G – d."

Therefore, it's no surprise they placed a high value upon God's Word, particularly the five books of Moses. Copies of the sacred writings were kept in special compartments to prevent damage and abuse. Scribes meticulously copied God's book as it was slowly read to them. They methodically wrote down word after word after word. When they were done with the page they counted the rows. Then they counted the letters per row. If anything didn't match the original, they threw the whole thing away and started over. They devoted many hours to studying and memorizing. They could quote Scripture at length.

They thought they had life by diligently studying and rigorously keeping the laws and commands as well as the traditions and interpretations accumulated around the laws and commands. They failed to see that Scripture isn't the end but is a means to the end. That end is to see Jesus.

Let's be clear, I believe it's incredibly important to read and study the Bible. We've encouraged everybody in the congregation to make a habit of reading and studying God's Word. It's not so we can answer a bunch of questions, feel good about ourselves or be able to check something off our "to do" list.

The purpose for getting into the Bible is so we can know and experience Jesus Christ as Savior and thereby have life and a relationship with God.

A missionary in Argentina was distributing Bibles in a prison. He asked a man if he wanted one. "Yes, I would. I can use the paper to roll cigarettes." The missionary replied, "I'll give you a Bible if you agree to read the pages before you use them as rolling paper." The prisoner agreed and received a Bible.

Years later the missionary was at a large meeting when a stranger approached him. The man asked the missionary if he'd been to such and such a prison in a particular year. The missionary couldn't remember. The man asked if he recalled a man who wanted a Bible for cigarette paper. That jogged the missionary's memory.

The man said he was that man. He'd become a Christian and was studying to be a pastor. The word of God had penetrated his heart, but only after he had smoked his way through Matthew, Mark and Luke.

There are many people who are like the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They're deceived because they think they can get to heaven by reading the Bible, praying, going to church, being good and not sinning big sins. These are all fantastic things to do but they aren't what enables a person to get to heaven. The only way, according to Jesus, is to believe in him which is to place their trust and confidence in him and what he has done. He's the one who has come from the Father and knows how to get back.