

Miracles of Jesus 12-05-18b

Let's continue our study of the miracles of Christ tonight by looking at the eighth in the series that we are covering. And coincidentally, this is another paralyzed man. Turn with me to John chapter five.

If you are acquainted with the gospel of John, you know that he incorporates seven major signs into his account. We have already seen sign one and sign two, which was the turning of the water to wine at Cana and the healing of the nobleman's son. Well, this is number three in the gospel of John.

Let's take a look at chapter five together. After this, which is the nobleman's son at the end of chapter four, 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 which is called in the Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame and paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water. Then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water was made well of whatever disease he had.

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, he said to him, do you want to be made well? Sick man answered him, sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, rise, take up your bed and walk.

And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, it is the Sabbath.

It is not lawful for you to carry your bed. He answered them, he who made me well said to me, take up your bed and walk. They asked him, who is the man who said to you, take up your bed and walk? But the one who was healed did not know who it was for Jesus had withdrawn a multitude being in that place.

Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you have been made well, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon you. The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason, the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him because he had done these things on the Sabbath.

Okay, well, one of the things you may have observed here is that like our study in Mark chapter two, there is a man who is paralyzed and who is having some difficulty finding a remedy. In both cases, Jesus says virtually identical words, arise, take up your bed and walk. So it's a happy combination that we get to look at these two side by side tonight.

First of all, if you look at John chapter five and the details that are given in the setup of this, they are not without significance. As you know by now, anytime scripture gives us a detail, it's important. So we know first of all, that there is a feast.

Jesus is in Jerusalem, not Capernaum, not Cana. He's down in Jerusalem. So what kind of feast would this be? One of the assembly feasts.

Three times a year, the men of Israel were to assemble. What were those three times? First time is for the spring feasts. You've got Passover, unleavened bread, first fruits, right? Then you've got a seven week hiatus, if you're counting from Passover.

And then what do you have? What comes next? Feast of Pentecost, which is also an assembly feast, right? Then much later, a few months later, you've got the fall feasts beginning with Rosh Hashanah, Feast of the Trumpet, Day of Atonement, Feast of Booths, right? Which one is this? Well, most often the biggest feast there is, is the Passover. And if this is a reference to Passover, it usually says the feast. The feast is normally the Passover.

Also, because there's so many sick people laying out around the pool, this doesn't appear to be cold weather, which would be more likely to be the case around Passover and also for the fall feasts. So this is most likely, although it's not definitive, but it's most likely the middle. By the way, we also know that Jesus has already been to Jerusalem earlier from our previous studies.

Remember he had been in Jerusalem and done some things, come back up to Galilee, and people had heard what he did in Jerusalem. And so this appears to be a couple of months after his first Jerusalem visit. This would be Pentecost that year, most likely.

So there's a Feast of the Jews. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, even if it's coming from the mountains, it's always up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate.

What's interesting about this, just as a side note, when it comes to the dating of the Gospels, have you heard this stuff that everything is late, that it was all written in the second century and that it's trying to be early, but it's not? One of the pieces of evidence that John wrote this Gospel early is this statement. Daniel Wallace wrote a whole paper on this phrase. Now there is in Jerusalem.

What do you notice about that? What's the tense? It doesn't say now there was in Jerusalem. If John was writing on the Isle of Patmos in the 90s AD, what would he say? There was back before the destruction because all of this, all the walls got knocked down. The temple's knocked down.

The stuff is all in ruins there. This is still the case when John writes. So there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate, a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda.

To cut a very long story short, this is in the north wall and the sheep, which in the earliest days of the temple were brought in for sacrifice, were brought in through this gate. And this pool was for the cleansing, the washing of the sheep before they went on to be sacrificed. So it is a cleansing pool.

It is a sanctifying pool for sacrificial animals. And so the Sheep Gate, this is the gate that the sacrificial sheep would come in. Also the goats and probably the oxen, but mostly sheep come through here.

And this pool was used for that. It's a very, it says called in Hebrew, Bethesda. And again, without going into great etymological detail, this derives from Beth Chesed.

And when you start smashing these words together, the Ch goes away. And so you have the S and the D from Chesed and you put an A on the end and you get Bethesda instead of Beth Chesed. What would that mean, Beth Chesed? What does Chesed mean in Hebrew? Grace, loyal love, Chesed, faithful, loyal love, grace.

And Beth means house. So this is, the pool is called the place of grace, the place of loyal love. And it's not without import.

Having five porches. This thing for a long time, they thought that John was just making stuff up because all of this got buried under the ruins of Jerusalem. There was no such pool, no such gate.

They didn't know anything about it. In recent years, excavations have uncovered this pool and there are actually two pools. And it's wider at one end than it is at the other.

But you notice it says five porches. These were five covered porticos because the two pools side by side, there was a porch or a walkway in between the two. So if you have the four sides with a colonnaded covering and then you have one going down the center also covered, how many porticos does that give you? How many porches does that give you? It's five.

It's exactly what they have found. They have found the gate. They have found the remains of the pool.

They have found the columns that held up the roof over these porches. It's exactly as John describes it. There is in Jerusalem a gate with a pool.

How can a pool have five porches? Well, that's what they found. Here's how. It's got a ramp running right across the middle, dividing it into two pools.

And you can imagine, perhaps they might put the dirty sheep on one side and get them reasonably clean, then take them to the second side, almost like a mikvah, where you go in on one side and you come up on the other side clean. So that's the layout. In these lay

a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed.

And then if you've got a good Bible there, your New King James, I have a text note saying the rest of this verse three and all of verse four is not found in any manuscript before the fourth century AD. And what happened is later on when they saw the man say, when the water is stirred up, people get ahead of me and I can't get in. They said, well, we need some way to explain this.

It seems kind of cryptic. And so they backed up here and put this information in. This may or may not have been the traditional belief that an angel stirred the water.

It isn't a truth. There was not actual healing. There wasn't an actual angel, but there may have been some latent tradition or a memory of a superstition that at some point, if maybe in this five porch colonnaded area, there might've been some weird wind currents that would somehow create some turbulence in the water.

And people said, ooh, there's a spirit in the water. And if I get in there, I'll catch the angel before he leaves. And so there was some sort of superstitious belief.

We don't know exactly what it was. This is one idea that's been incorporated into the text, but does not appear to be original. So a great multitude of people are laying on all of these five porches.

Then we skip down to verse five. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity 38 years. If you think biblically, what would 38 years match? Is there any thing we know in the Bible that would also be 38 years? The wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel as you progress through.

And guess what happens in the 38th year? The Meribah. The people complain because there is no water. And the Meribah incident occurs in the 38th year.

It's two years before they finally go into the land under Joshua. And you can figure this out going back to the book of Numbers. But so that's interesting because it puts us in mind, here are the people who have had an experience of God in their wilderness wanderings for 38 years, and they still grumble at the drop of a hat.

So keep in mind the number five, which is always associated with Moses in the Hebrew mind, the five books of Moses. 38 years is a couple of years before your 40-year generation is complete, your 40 years of wandering in the wilderness are complete. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been in that condition a long time, how did Jesus know this? Maybe he's got a spot with his name carved in the rocks of the porch, or Jesus knew this because of the supernatural ministry of the spirit, whatever it is, Jesus knows he's been there a long time.

Now, he says to him, do you want to be made well? Go back and read verse three, verse

3a, the part we know is legitimate. What does it say? In these five porches lay how many people? Say it out loud. How many people are there? A great multitude.

So why doesn't Jesus walk to the corner or to the side of one of these porches and say, how many of y'all would like to be healed? Who does he ask? One guy, one guy. Jesus says to him, do you want to be made well? Now, I've been paralyzed since I was a child. I've been paralyzed for 38 years.

Stranger walks up and says, do you want to be made well? What would be a good response? Yes, absolutely. I would do anything to be made well. What does the man say? Sir, you know what my problem is? You know why I can't get well? People, people are my problem.

There's nobody who is willing to drop me in the pool when the funny wind current hits, when the water is troubled. This by the way is terrazzo and every other place you find it in scripture in the New Testament. Terrazzo, it talks about like people being troubled.

Jesus in John 14, let not your heart be terrazzoed, troubled, let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, Paul says, terrazzo. It means to be stirred up, agitated, usually in a negative sense. In the New Testament, it's almost always negative.

And there are many commands to not be troubled. Let no man trouble me, let not your heart be troubled, do not be troubled. Certain evil men came and stirred up the people, terrazzoed the crowd so that they became a mob and wanted to stone Paul and so forth in Acts.

Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is terrazzoed, when the water is agitated, troubled. But while I am coming, not only, and so I'm trying to get there by myself. People are the problem because they won't help me and people are the problem because they're butting in front of me and not letting me in.

The answer to your question, do I want to be healed, is I try to be healed by getting into this water. I think that getting into this water while it is stirred up will heal me, but people keep getting in my way. So I'm laying here bitter at people, bitter because nobody will help me.

I see other people getting helped. They get helped here, they get helped. I've been here for years and years.

I've been here a long time. Nobody helps me, everybody's sick of me, probably because I sit here and complain so much. Nobody can stand me anymore.

And when I, so I'm feebly trying to crawl my way there, dragging my paralyzed legs behind me, and by the time I get there, somebody's beat me to it and they hopped into

the little troubled area of the water and I miss out. Jesus said to him, stand up, pick up and go. Rise, take up your bed and walk.

To his credit, immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked. This guy is a griper. He is subjective.

He is ticked off at people. He doesn't really answer Jesus' question. Do you want to be made well? He doesn't say, of course I want to be made.

He says, he just wants to grumble. Isn't this the nature of the children of Israel in the wilderness? Did they not grumble and complain constantly? But they had the minimum amount of obedience and the minimum amount of faith that when God said arise, cross over the water and go into the land, they did it. And that's all it takes.

Enough faith and enough obedience that God can bless. And that's what this man has. That day was the Sabbath.

Now, think about the first paralyzed man we studied this evening out of Mark chapter two. He was also paralyzed. He had people who would pick him up and move him where he needed to go, didn't he? Jesus looked at them and said, son, your sins are forgiven you.

Does he say anything about this man's sins? Does he say anything about this man's faith? It doesn't say Jesus saw his faith. It doesn't say Jesus saw his faith. It says Jesus saw he'd been there a long time, right? Purpose of the miracle is different.

The method of the miracle is virtually identical but the context is quite different. Afterward, when Jesus finds him in the temple, notice the man is in the temple. He didn't go out and visit relatives from afar.

He's in Jerusalem and he goes to the temple and Jesus finds him at the temple. This is a good thing. The man is in the right place.

Why would he go to the temple? Probably to praise God for his deliverance and his healing. Jesus finds him in the temple and he says, look, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

Keep on being obedient. Keep on being obedient. Sin is still an issue here, isn't it? In the first case, he said, son, your sins are forgiven you.

For this man, he says, sin no more. Now, there are different ways you can give a command in Greek. This is a present imperative with a negative.

Present means durative action, right? This is something going on. An heiress would have the idea, start doing something you're not currently doing. But when you put the negative with it, this is no longer keep on sinning.

Why does Jesus say no longer keep on sinning? Stop keeping on sinning. Stop being a sinner would be another way to phrase it. Stop this present tense activity.

How can Jesus say that? Does this man have bitterness? Does he have anger toward people? Jesus sees that. Jesus heals him anyway. He doesn't say you've got to get your sin problem solved and then I will heal you.

Jesus heals him and says, see, you have been made well. Stop sinning. Reform your attitude.

Different theological point being made. What is the point in the first paralytic? There's a picture there of the kingdom and the necessity for there to be forgiveness before the man of faith can be freed into the liberty of obedience. In this case, it's a different thing.

This is a look back. This is a look at the paralysis. These two men are both paralyzed.

They've had different reactions. One is a man of faith. One is a man of faithful friends.

This is a man of bitterness who has no friends, probably because of his bitterness. Jesus heals each one. They're both paralyzed.

Jesus takes away the paralysis for both of them, but it teaches a different lesson, doesn't it? For one, it is an emphasis and the man is a glorious illustration of how the forgiveness of sins, sins makes it possible for kingdom blessings to come to the nation. Here, also a national picture is a reminder that even the sinning people are going to be given this blessing of the kingdom, but it's going to be different. And the message to them is stop your sinning.

Not your sins, plural, but your sinning. Stop your sinning. See, you have been healed.

This is what's going to face Israel in the millennial kingdom. The faithful believers of the Old Testament days are going to be free. They're going to see, like Job says, behold, my redeemer liveth and I will see him.

Even if the worms corrupt my flesh with my own eyes, I will see him. He's a man of faith and he is going to have wonderful blessing and opportunity in the kingdom. God sees his faith.

God forgives his sin. God appoints him a priest for his friends. You three guys, Job is going to offer sacrifices for you.

He sort of acts as their priest. He's a man of faith. This man represents the other end of the spectrum.

All of those other Israelites that are going to be raised and the millennial kingdom is going to come, but they've got a different challenge. Jesus doesn't tell the first man, stop

your sinning. He says, you know what? You're a man of faith and your sins are forgiven.

It's as they may have been forgiven a long time ago. He says, you are a man of forgiven sins. This is a man who's got a sinning problem that he's got to address.

His problems are not over because he's been healed. The first man's problems are over because he's already got his larger problem under control. Very interesting though.

It's two sides of the same issue. They're both paralyzed men. Jesus says the very same thing to both and they are both obedient.

One is obedient because he has been forgiven. This one is obedient and needs to be forgiven. Needs to be cleansed.

Needs to stop his sinning and deal with it through God's grace. In both cases, there is a third element, which is the observation of the legalistic Pharisaic component. In the first case, they quibble with Jesus' authority to pronounce the forgiveness of sins, which is a theological, an invisible attribute, an invisible function.

You can't look at somebody and tell by looking if their sins are forgiven. This is something only Jesus could do and say. And later on, he will delegate that ability and that authority to his apostles.

And that's in one realm. Here, they observe it and they say, Jesus was persecuted by the Jews. They sought to kill him because he had done these things on the Sabbath.

And they are as obsessed with external human definitions of obedience and traditions that had accreted around God's actual commands to rest on the Sabbath. Here's God himself telling a man to rise and take up his bed and walk. But of course, they're so far from seeing that, that they turn the word of God and the will of God into... I was thinking about this the other day because we got attacked by some people who disagreed with a message that went out over the radio.

A biblical message went out making remarks about a particular kind of lifestyle. Representatives from those lifestyle came back and tried in a very nefarious way to cause disruption and plant viruses on my computer and so on. Then I'm thinking, so you're quibbling with a theological message.

You're saying we're wrong about the Bible. We're wrong about God's grace and God's message. And you're going to teach us a lesson by harming us with viruses and deceit and so on.

In what way does this make you right? You see the same thing here, or it's an illustration of what you see here, where these people who are so zealous for righteousness and say, well, we've got to protect God's wonderful Sabbath. So we're going to kill you. In the

name of the righteousness and holiness of the Sabbath, we're going to have to kill you.

Is there any sense of proportion here? Any sense of self-analysis? Who am I to murder somebody because I perceive that he's breaking a Sabbath regulation? It's, this is a measure of blindness that comes onto us and into us when we are far from faith, far from humility. So in conclusion, you're at the pool of grace. You're at the place where the lambs were cleansed.

And this is where all of these people, they consider it to be sort of a holy place, that all that, why would the sick people congregate here? Why not somewhere else? Why not down at the Salome pool? Or why not on some other convenient porch? Why here? It had been assigned sort of a mystical significance. And of all of the people there, Jesus only addresses the one man. And it's a reminder to us that we have to be sensitive when it comes to charity, when it says, we have this in our memory verse, on some have compassion.

Pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. On some have compassion. Well, which are the some? We have to be sensitive to God's Holy Spirit.

Jesus did not blanket heal everybody at the pool. Can you imagine what an amazing feat that would have been? Did he have it in his power? Absolutely. Could he have made a huge noise during the feast with all of Israel assembled? And could he not have rationalized this in his mind? What a great way to get out the word.

Can you imagine the crowd I'm gonna have tomorrow on Sunday when I decide to preach? Why, everybody will be there. He singles out this one man and he walks away and leaves everybody else that's sick and afflicted on all five porches in exactly the same condition. He heals this one man.

This one man, we know two things about him. We know that he was a sinner and we can hear some of his sin coming out when Jesus asks him the question that he never answers. And we know that he had a minimum level of obedience.

Jesus said, arise and he arose. So there is a relationship in each case to sin. The sickness and the sin are associated.

Later on in John nine, we're gonna see the man born blind and the disciples are gonna say, who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind and Jesus is gonna say, neither one. Sin doesn't have anything to do with this. And what it tells us is each of these situations, each of these illustrations, each of these miraculous accounts has to be taken in its own context and on its own terms.

You can't say anytime you see sickness, there is sin. Sometimes it is a metaphor. Sometimes it is an illustration and a picturing the paralysis showing the uselessness that comes from sinfulness.

And that's what these two stories do. Both of them, Jesus connects them with sin. In both cases, he mentioned sin.

Either your sins are forgiven or see you have been healed, stop sinning. Jesus connects it. In John nine, Jesus is gonna say, we're not talking about sin here.

We're talking about something else. So we have to learn to be sensitive to the context. Look at the clues that are given in the detail so that we can derive application.

What is the application from this? Whether we are believers or whether we are unbelievers, sin paralyzes us in terms of usefulness, in terms of productivity, in terms of acceptability. And it is faith that enables us to receive the grace of God and that grace persists through obedience. What does Jesus tell this last man? Look, you have been healed.

Stop sinning. And what's the rest of it? Lest a worse fate befall you. If you continue sinning, something worse than paralysis will hit you.

You have exhibited this one instance of obedience. When I said, stand up and take up your bed, you did so, that's great. Now you need to continue in that obedience, faith and obedience.

There's an emphasis on faith with the first paralytic and forgiveness. There is an emphasis on obedience and consistency in this second. And it is not enough to be forgiven.

We need to forsake sin. So there's a lot of fruitful meditation here in a comparison and contrast of these two paralyzed men to whom Jesus gives almost identical commands. But the setting is different.

The men are different. The level of support is different. The reaction of the Pharisees is pretty much the same.

They're hung up on ritual. They're hung up on details. And they totally miss the point both times.

Religiosity and standards of human engineered and human making blind us to what God is doing. And we are, of course, interested in what God is doing, what God has to say, what God has to teach. And there is a danger in hidebound traditionalism, hidebound religion, in blinding us to the presence of the Son of God, the power of God's grace and God's provision.

So that is here as an element as well. Well, we will continue our study in the miracles Sunday morning. I just wanted to get this one in because I have a schedule of my own devising.

And this will allow us to finish the study in time to do the one that will follow it. So we'll close here in a word of prayer and we will pick up with miracles nine and 10 on the day after tomorrow. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the powerful and various ways that you illustrate and communicate the things that you would have us to know and to learn and to live by. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will make these things meaningful and pertinent for each one of us. Help us to see in our individual circumstances and in our personal lives how we can best make application and live in the light of these things that are so clearly presented through your word.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.