

52 THE PURSUIT OF JESUS

What do We need from Jesus?

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OPENING

We are spending this entire year walking through the life of Jesus. Our focus right now is on His power as we continue in Mark Moore's Quest 52 series this quarter. In Chapter 24, we are looking at a great encounter that happens in John, chapter 5. Through this one miracle, Jesus showed His power over false gods and false saviors, and He is going to show His power over rules-based religions. This is a turning point in His ministry because, from this point on, the religious leaders will be out to kill Him.

SCRIPTURE¹

John 5:1-18 Some time later, Jesus went *up to Jerusalem* for one of the Jewish festivals. 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. Here a *great number* of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed... One who was there had been an invalid for *thirty-eight years*. When Jesus *saw* him lying there and *learned* that he had been in this condition for a long time... “Do you *want* to get well?” “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.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! *Pick up your mat* and walk.” At once the man was *cured*; he picked up his mat and *walked*. The day on which this took place was a *Sabbath*. The day on which this took place was a *Sabbath*, 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.” But he replied, “The *man* who made me well said to me, ‘*Pick up your mat* and walk.’” So they asked him, “*Who* is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” The man who was healed had *no idea* who it was, for Jesus had *slipped away* into the crowd that was there. 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.” The man went away and *told* the Jewish leaders that it was *Jesus* who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to *persecute* him. In his defense Jesus said to them, “My *Father* is always at his *work* to this very day, and *I too* am working.” For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own *Father*, making himself *equal with God*.

Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

OBSERVATION

Here's what you need to know about this pool: Bethesda was not part of the Jewish tradition. It was not some innocent place where superstitious stuff happened. Bethesda was a place of paganism. The pool of Bethesda

¹ Scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated.

was a shrine to the Greek god Asclepius who was the god of medicine and healing. Now, we don't know if it was DOZENS of people or HUNDREDS of people who had gathered to hear Jesus, but we know it was crowded! It was believed that when someone had an illness or a disability, they were being punished for something in their past - some sort of Karma for something they had done or parents done. There were very few physicians and only the RICH had access to them. The POOR and SICK were basically on their own.

QUESTION: Consider Job, chapter 38. What did God say to Job in answer to his questions about suffering?

QUESTION: In what ways could you be helping disabled or poor people in our community today?

Now this man had been like this for thirty-eight years and he had FORSAKEN his faith. We know that he was Jewish because he would go **TO** the temple after this, but as a paralyzed man, he was not allowed **IN** the temple. And maybe he had given up on God so he was at the pool of Asclepius - a pagan site. Jesus did not reprimand him. Jesus went to the very place this guy should not be. He leaned down and asked him a question. *"Do you want to get well?"*

QUESTION: When have you considered giving up on God because He has not met your expectations? When do you find yourself making plans for your future without asking God first?

Some of us don't want to get well – we have been complaining and complaining and we have not done what it takes to get well. Sometimes getting well is HARDER than staying sick. Getting help calls for more HUMILITY than staying where we are. Perhaps we are unwilling to pay the price to change to get well. We haven't completely given up on God, but we chase after money or relationships or go from bed to bed looking for satisfaction. If we are hedging our bets know this: It can't be Jesus plus something. It is Jesus and Jesus alone. What alternative do we have?

QUESTION: Do you want to get well? What would cause you to choose to stay where you are?

APPLICATION

THERE ARE 2 EQUALLY LOST GROUPS OF PEOPLE IN THIS STORY. The **IRRELIGIOUS** and the **RELIGIOUS**. There are those who have LEFT the faith and those who ABUSED the faith. This miracle is very significant in what it points to. This is not just a random act of kindness. If it were, Jesus could have waved his arms and healed every single person at the pool that day. But Jesus chose THIS GUY perhaps because he was Jewish and had walked away from God. He chose THIS PLACE because it represented the work of Satan and He chose THIS DAY because it was the Sabbath and He is Lord over the Sabbath. This wasn't just about compassion. This was about his **power** and **authority** as the Son of God over the works of Satan and over **WORKS-BASED** religions. In one miracle He CONQUERED both! **1) He showed His POWER OVER FALSE GODS** . Idolatry was the number one sin of the children of Israel; **2) He showed His POWER OVER RULES-BASED RELIGIONS.** We view the Pharisees as the bad guys of the Bible, but all of the rules they had about the Sabbath came out of their best intentions. The Rabbis believed that one of the reasons the Messiah had not yet come was because the people of Israel were not showing proper respect for the scriptures. So, the Pharisees, in an attempt to keep the Sabbath, came up with all of these rules that were like a fence around the command. There were thirty-nine categories of things they could not do on the Sabbath. They had the same moral authority in the culture as the written Torah. One of these was that no one could carry anything on the Sabbath.

QUESTION: How do you witness to Jewish believers who do not accept Jesus as their Messiah?

Healing on the Sabbath was allowed if there was an immediate need. The Law allowed for healing or treating people who were sick, but NOT for healing an ONGOING condition like this guy had. The thought was: Heal him on another day. But Jesus didn't just heal him. He told him to "pick up his mat and walk" which was considered work. The healing might be an act of compassion, but the carrying of the mat was clearly violating their rules.

QUESTION: When have you attended a church that was rule-based rather than grace-based? Tell us about that experience.

QUESTION: When has your rule-based version of Christianity gotten in the way of your loving people God loves?

This is what John wants us to know: Jesus said, "Man wasn't made for the Sabbath, the Sabbath was made for man." He created PEOPLE and then created the LAW to protect them. Jesus' power points to His identity - Jesus is God, but that is what each of us has to decide for ourselves: **WHO IS JESUS?**

QUESTION: Eternity is a reality. When you ask yourself where you are currently destined to spend it, what is your answer? What is keeping you from doing everything Jesus asks of you to make sure it is with Him?

QUESTION: What is it about this week's study that especially caught your attention?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, the Your Word becomes a mirror and, when we examine ourselves in it, we can be transformed into Your image and become like Jesus. Help us to be humble, obedient and compassionate as we acknowledge Your power in all circumstances. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Consider Job, chapter 38. What did God say to Job in answer to his questions about suffering?

QUESTION: In what ways could you be helping disabled or poor people in our community today?

QUESTION: When have you considered giving up on God because He has not met your expectations? When do you find yourself making plans for your future without asking God first?

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