

Sunday October 15, 2023 | John 5:1-18

Chapter 4 followed Jesus' journey as He left Judea and headed back to Galilee. We saw Him stop in Samaria and offer living water to the woman at the well. Then He healed the official's son at Capernaum. Chapter 5 begins with Jesus heading back to Jerusalem. The gospel of John records multiple trips to Jerusalem that are not found in the other three gospels.

John 5:1-18 ESV

- (1) After this there **was a feast** of the Jews, and Jesus went up to **Jerusalem**.
- (2) Now there is in Jerusalem **by the Sheep Gate a pool**, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.
- (3) In these lay a **multitude** of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.
- (5) One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.
- (6) 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?"
- (7) 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 am going another steps down before me."
- (8) Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."
- (9) And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.
- (10) 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."
- (11) But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'"
- (12) They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'"
- (13) Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.
- (14) Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."
- (15) The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.
- (16) And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.
- (17) But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."
- (18) 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 with God.

We are not told what feast Jesus is attending. Jews had to travel to Jerusalem for the 3 major feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. For this story the feast itself is not the important detail but the location of the story. Jesus is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate. This was the gate that the sacrificial animals were brought through. By this gate was two large pools that were covered by awnings.

A multitude of disabled people came to these pools in hopes of being healed. Multiple words are used to describe the group, they suffered from debilitating sicknesses, blindness, one word even means dry as in withered due to disease. They came to these pools because they thought they could help heal them.

One scribe wanted to explain why everyone came to these pools so they inserted a comment. It was **inserted after 400 A.D.** as no manuscript before then has the comment. Depending on your translation the end of verse 3 and all of verse 4 is either entirely skipped, or put in brackets to show it is not original. At least 20 manuscripts even have **an asterisk** to show that it was added.

John 5:3-4 NAS95

(3) In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters;

(4) for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

The people thought an angel came and stirred up the waters, and the first in was healed. This must have been the folk tale that explained how the water helped heal people. Again, these verses are not scripture. This is why reading the footnotes is so helpful, they will let you know when this happens.

John 5:5-6 ESV

(5) One man was there who had been an invalid for **thirty-eight years**.

(6) 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?"

This man had been sick for 38 years. He either had a disease or debilitating illness that gave him an incapacity of some sort. I find it amazing that Jesus saw this man out of the multitude that was there. He was not the only sick person by this pool. **Jesus not only saw Him, but knew Him.** Jesus knew He had been sick for a long time. Again, we see Jesus initiate the conversation. He cares and loves us so deeply **He was able to see the person out of the crowd.** He sees us individually we do not get lost in the group.

Matthew 18:12-14 ESV

(12) What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and **go in search of the one that went astray?**

(13) And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. (14) So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

As we go astray, He pursues us relentlessly. He knows when we have left the flock. He searches us out. There are so many times we can feel like God is distant or not paying attention to us. Especially when we are out of fellowship with Him. I want to remind you this morning that **He is searching for us, initiates the conversation, and knows us personally.** Our God wants such an intimate and personal walk with every one of us.

John 5:6-7 ESV

(6) 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?”**

(7) 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 am going another steps down before me.”**

Jesus asks Him a very interesting question. Do you want to be healed? This man has been staring at the water of the pool intently, day after day in hopes of being healed. He would try to be the first in, but failed every time. The man shares what He thinks the problem is, I have no one. The man is alone and thinks he needs someone's help to get to the water. It is no accident that Jesus went up to the man who had no help and was hopeless. **Jesus is not offering to help get the man into the water but to heal him.** The man has put his faith, in the power of the water. He is focused on the pool. The issue is not having help but where He is focused. **If this man wants to be healed, He is going to have to take His eyes off the pool.**

John 5:8-9 ESV

(8) Jesus said to him, **“Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”**

(9) And **at once the man was healed**, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

Through the Spirit Jesus has the power to instantly heal the man, no pool needed. He is the messiah. Isaiah prophesied about the power of the Messiah would have.

Isaiah 35:4-6 ESV

(4) Say to those who have an **anxious heart**, “Be strong; fear not! **Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”**

(5) Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

(6) **then shall the lame man leap like a deer**, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

When we are anxious in heart, and hopeless we need to remember who Jesus is. He has come to save us and He is coming again. He has the power to reverse illness and heal us both physically and spiritually. He healed during His first coming to prove He was the messiah and show what His second coming would be like.

John 5:9-13 ESV

(9) And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. **Now that day was the Sabbath.**

(10) 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."

(11) But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, **'Take up your bed, and walk.'**"

(12) They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'"

(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.

This man has been sick for 38 long years. He has one encounter with Jesus and he is up and walking away from the pool. What I find amazing is at this point **he does not even know who healed him.** His eyes had been on that pool as Jesus had stopped and talked with him. He is healed and not sure who did it. All of this happened on the Sabbath, and now the religious leaders get involved. **The mat that was the proof of his healing became the issue.** He broke **man-made** Sabbath rules by picking up His mat. The Jews had 39 definitions of work that were forbidden on the Sabbath. The rules were man made and did not make sense. If he carried his mat, that broke the Sabbath but if people carried him on the mat when he was sick that was allowed.

This is pure legalism. There is no rejoicing, or celebrating what just happened. Even the man starts to put the blame on Jesus. When rules become the focus, we miss the heart. We miss what is truly important.

Mark 2:27-28 ESV

(27) And He said to them, **"The Sabbath was made for man,** not man for the Sabbath.

(28) So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

Legalism has the ability to get us focused on the wrong thing. Instead of looking to Jesus and trying to grow in our walk with Him we are focused on a rule. Our traditions that might have started in a legitimate place become the focus.

I want to be clear that the Old Testament teaches how important honoring the Sabbath was. In Numbers 15:32-36 a man is stoned for working on the Sabbath. The Jews had legitimate reasons to be careful to observe the Sabbath correctly. This is what is so deceptive about legalism. There is a constant pull and temptation to follow rules and not Christ. Following Christ means we are to walk in the Spirit and our hearts must be engaged. **There is no faking walking in the Spirit. Rules, legalism can be faked.** The heart does not need to be engaged and the more successful we are at following the rules the more we ignore our heart.

Galatians 5:1-5 ESV

- (1) **For freedom Christ has set us free**; stand firm therefore, **and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.**
- (2) Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, **Christ will be of no advantage to you.**
- (3) I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.
- (4) **You are severed from Christ**, you who would be justified by the law; **you have fallen away from grace.**
- (5) For **through the Spirit, by faith**, we ourselves eagerly wait for the **hope of righteousness.**

Legalism and rules are called a yoke of slavery and they make us severed from Christ. We are still saved but we are not relying on Him. We are called to live through the Spirit by faith relying fully on His righteousness. It is about seeing Jesus and walking with Him.

Galatians 5:15-16 ESV

- (15) But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.
- (16) But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Verse 15 describes how harsh we become due to legalism. We bite and devour each other. Instead of showing grace and loving each other we fight. **Legalism has no value in helping us grow in Christ.** It stunts our growth by hardening our hearts. Some of the harshest people are believers, who have been hardened by legalism. Legalism leads to sins in our hearts. **Walking in Spirit will help us not live in sin.** Scripture presents a walk with Jesus and having fellowship with Him not a list of rules to follow. The Jews were missing the messiah because of their rules.

John 5:14 ESV

- (14) Afterward **Jesus found him** in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! **Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.**”

Jesus intentionally seeks out the man in the temple. The word means **to make a purposeful search for**. He cares deeply for Him. Jesus instructs Him to sin no more. This could have multiple meanings. Jesus could be referencing the man’s reaction to the healing as sin. The context does not fully support this. We are not told enough to tell the man’s heart. **Jesus could also be referencing the illness was a result of sin.** We know from scripture that all illnesses are a result of the Sin curse on humanity, but some illnesses **are** the direct result of sin in our lives (1 Cor 11:29-30). Either way Jesus is pointing out that physical healing is not the point. What benefit is physical health when our bodies are going to die? **Jesus encouraging the man to live for the eternal.**

John 5:15-18 ESV

(15) The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

(16) And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because **He was doing these things on the Sabbath.**

(17) But Jesus answered them, **“My Father is working until now, and I am working.”**

(18) 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 with God.**

The Jewish hated Jesus and wanted to kill Him early on. He ignored their Sabbath rules which threatened their control over the people. Legalism leads to control. What I find amazing is that Jesus takes the time to defend His actions to these leaders. **He points out that God the Father is constantly at work even on the Sabbath.** The Father rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:2-3) but He also is constantly upholding creation.

Genesis 8:21-22 ESV

(21) And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

(22) **While the earth remains**, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, **shall not cease.**”

God just promised to uphold this earth. He is at work keeping the seasons and patterns of nature going as long as this earth still exist. **He made sure the sun will rise even on the Sabbath.** Jesus is trying to show the Jews that they have missed the point of the Sabbath rest. It is not about focusing on the specific work we do not do but finding our rest in Him.

Hebrews 4:8-11 ESV

(8) For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

(9) So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,**

(10) for whoever has entered God's rest **has also rested from his works as God did from His.**

(11) **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

God rested on the seventh day and as we believe in Jesus we can rest from our own works. We do not have to try to save ourselves or add to our salvation. We can rest in what Jesus accomplished on the cross. **But the story does not stop at salvation.** God is still at work. In our growth we are to strive to enter His rest. We have the chance to walk daily in the rest He offers though life in the Spirit. Let us stive to enter that rest!