

<b>Series:</b> Portraits of Jesus in John	<b>Reference:</b> <i>John 5:1-9</i>	<b>Title:</b> Physician	<b>Date:</b> 03.08.2019
<b>Website Writeup:</b> Do we really want freedom since it comes with responsibility & life-change? Jesus brings it, we need only say, "Yes!"			

### COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

#### Memory Verses for this Series - about 1 every 2 weeks

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one & only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace & truth. (Jn 1:14)

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one & only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit & in truth." (Jn 4:24)

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (Jn 6:35)

<sup>31</sup> To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup> Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn 8:31-32)

<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (Jn 8:36)

<sup>34</sup> "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (Jn 13:34-35)

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (Jn 14:6)

<sup>5</sup> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (Jn 15:5)

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (Jn 20:29)

Turn with me to p727 in your church Bibles to John 5:1-9. Keep that open on your lap as we walk through this passage verse by verse. Today we see *Jesus is the Great Physician*. The question is - *do we want to be healed?* There's a pattern developing with Jesus' words to people over past weeks. Don't let this becoming rote, we're drilling deeper into His heart for us & what we can bring to others by His message. This is becoming almost repetitive, and when God repeats, we listen.

Freedom's frightening. Sounds counter intuitive, but it comes with responsibility & change which typically frightens people. If you think about it, there's one thing which trumps sex as a marketing ploy; safety. Safe cars. Safe schools. Safe foods. Safety from the Corona Virus has disrupted the world economy & travel! Staying the same often seems inviting instead of the risk of opening ourselves to responsibility & change.

Starting in verse 1 of John 5...*Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. <sup>2</sup>Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda & which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. <sup>3</sup>Here a great number of disabled people used to lie - the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.*

In the past we went through the book of Nehemiah where we explored the meaning of all the gates which led into the Temple of Jerusalem. Jesus is at the Sheep Gate where they brought sacrificial lambs into the Temple. At first glance this is a story about a diseased/crippled man by a pool in Jerusalem whom Jesus heals - but to stopping there we miss so much, because John's the master of imagery. His gospel's painted in fine detail - little colorful portraits of Jesus which seem to be similar. This gate was representative of the coming Messiah who'd be the ultimate sacrifice. Lambs brought through that gate foreshadowed the coming Lamb of God. The Lamb of God, at the entrance to the Sheep Gate where sacrificial sheep are brought into Jerusalem, the place ultimately of His sacrifice among a sea of sick people in need of healing.

*We remember Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14...“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate & broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate & narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. He is the Lamb of God, but also the Gate by which we enter into His Kingdom.*

And there's more... Bethesda meant the 'place or house of mercy' (Aram. *bêt ḥesdâ*) or a 'place of outpouring' (Heb. *bêt 'ešdâ*).<sup>1</sup> Jesus, the Lamb of God, next to the Sheep Gate, in Jerusalem, near this pool with five colonnades surrounding it which is called the House of Mercy, the place where mercy is poured out. Taking it further...John starts his gospel out referring to Jesus as the Living Word. Then changing water to wine at a wedding in Cana. Then telling Nicodemus he must be born of water & Spirit. Then Jesus as Living Water to the Samaritan woman. John's carrying his illustration through to its end. This man was looking for healing in a pool, and will find his true healing &

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1996). *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed.) (132). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

wholeness through Jesus the Living Water & Word of God - the ultimate sacrificial Lamb who heals once & for all.

This pool was used to wash those sacrificial lambs brought in through the Sheep Gate before Passover, and this story occurs during Passover! Everything about this setting bleeds Jesus as Passover Lamb bringing healing through sacrifice! The waters in the pool of Bethesda become a symbol of the purifying curing property of the blood of the Lamb. A symbol of something already come to pass - all the ritual cleansing & sacrifice foreshadowing the Lamb of God in Jesus healing once for all! John's painting a clear picture. Jesus the Lamb of God, Great High Priest, Living Water, Gate & Great Physician.

Verse 5...*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, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"*

Lame 38 years - longer than some of you've lived, but only a third of Christine Massey's life - it's okay, at her age she can't hear me anyway. How used to being sick & lame would this man have become? We get used to our infirmities, psychological, physical, or spiritual. People depressed for years develop lifestyles relying on depression. Battered wives become accustomed to abuse, even blaming herself. To be well means new responsibilities which sometimes overwhelm people more than the pain they face. A battered wife reliant on a controlling husband can't see life without him. Pain becomes our identity & we're unwilling to change the situation. It's understandable in some situations, but fear's never the answer. We get used to our prison walls - but God wants to heal us by his Living Word - are we allowing Him to wash us? Jesus asks, 'Do you want to be healed?' Many don't, since we don't know what to do with freedom!

In the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, Brooks was a career criminal. After 50 years of incarceration as an old man he's getting out of prison. His first reaction is to harm another prisoner, a friend, so he won't have to be released. The fear of freedom...but he's talked down by other prisoners & is released. Red, played by Morgan Freeman, later in the yard explains to the others why Brooks would do that to his friend. He explains, Brooks is institutionalized, inside prison he's an important, educated man. Outside he's just a used up con with arthritis in both hands who probably couldn't get a library card. On the outside Brooks can't handle his freedom, taking his life, leaving a note which said, "I've decided not to stay, I doubt anyone will put up a fuss for an old crook."

Think about what you rely on & have gotten used to. How you've resigned yourself to live in your personal prison. If Jesus were here offering you freedom, would you take it? Because what Red said is true admiring the physical walls of the prison he said, "At first you hate these walls, then you grow to rely on them, but they eventually take your life." That's the question Jesus asks, do you want to be free?

Thankfully our story doesn't end in despair, but in freedom. This man wants to be healed. Verse 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.”<sup>8</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat & walk.”<sup>9</sup>At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat & walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath...*

Jesus stands under the colonnades - the ancient equivalent of a hospital. He didn't visit palaces, but the sick in the house of mercy! This man didn't exhibit faith in Jesus per se, he didn't even know who He was. But Jesus comes to him as He did the Samaritan woman. This man reflects us - he can do nothing about his condition, at some point we're all unaware of our need until Jesus comes. I never planned on following God, let alone of becoming a pastor. This man's left helpless to heal himself as we're left helpless in our crippled spiritual state waiting for someone to do something.

The man answers yes, but he's powerless to do anything about it! Jesus doesn't take the easiest case, but the most hopeless! Not the person who can help himself & just needs a leg up - the person who can't help himself at all! There was a belief that an angel would stir the waters giving them healing powers & others were able to get into the pool before him. This guy couldn't hardly move. Just imagine, all that time trying, but never getting there. **There's a spiritual lesson in that - how we try to heal ourselves, but need the mercy & grace of Jesus. How we try to fill that God-shaped hole in our hearts with wrong things as we saw with the Samaritan woman last week.**

But the other lesson is - how often we give up on people. Seeing the sick, we don't bend down to help like the people around this man. We can't see beyond the current situation - we look down & not up at Jesus. Jesus is willing & happy to take on the most hopeless case if that person wants to be well. In Mat 8:3 the leper says if you're willing you can make me well. Jesus says, *"I'm willing - be clean"*. It's not that this man didn't want it, he just didn't have anyone to help him into the pool. Often the hurting are left friendless, we sense our own powerlessness to help when confronted with a situation only Jesus can cure & we walk away instead of responding in faith. Think about the people in your life who seem hopeless, have you given up? Have you only looked at the circumstances & not to Jesus? The Great Physician stepping in at hopeless moments.

This is intimately tied to the question, do we pray for those who are hurting, and even elicit prayer from others for them? We have our Prayer Team for this purpose, and it's often good to ask a person's permission to put it out to them. We've seen God move in those moments. It also concerns finance. It's often too great a financial burden for individuals to help to any great extent in certain situations. Which is why we've developed a Deacon Board this year. People who can meet with someone, assess their situation & direct them to social programs which may be of help. However, the local church itself often needs to step in at times. Which is why we have the goal of each member/regular attender of our church to be tithing at 10% of their income. Everything is spiritual, including finances. If we as individuals gave joyfully & sacrificially, we'd not be limited in our practical love for people & it would relieve the burden on individuals. I challenge you to revisit your giving in light of this. We never want to be limited in our

ability to show love in practical ways. Our giving needs to increase in order for us to do kingdom work without limitation.

Jesus doesn't say, "Let me help you into the pool." This Lamb didn't need to be washed. Jesus was the Great Physician, He can wash him. He says, "Get up & walk." It's by this Living Word we're healed. Many circles of Christianity downplay miracles, perhaps since they can't see them today - because they'll not take the risk to invite Jesus into the process. Rachel took a risk last week hearing from the Spirit there was someone with debilitating headaches - two people came forward with positive results! People typically turn their back on infirmity over which they have no control. But the miracles were necessary to reveal His ultimate power over creation. They're necessary still. It's the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God! Let's continually seek Jesus in these hopeless moments. Not sensationalizing them, but also not disregarding Jesus has creative & healing power by his Word.

This occurred on the Sabbath. Everyone was gathered in Jerusalem to worship - you'd think they'd be glad to see God at work. But, Jewish leaders won't recognize it, they're mad at this man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath! Healed after 38 years & they're mad at that! This miracle served to show more than mercy to an old man revealing Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath. They'd taken the Law of the Sabbath beyond its intention - restricting every little effort disregarding the good which needed to be done to those in need. Remember in Luke 14 Jesus heals another man on the Sabbath & asked the Pharisees present...*"If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?"*<sup>6</sup> *And they had nothing to say.* A paradigm shift, used to make them recognize the authority of Jesus, and the needs of people around them. It seems this old man went straight to the Temple to give thanks.

Then in John 5:14 Jesus meets him again & gives him a warning, *"See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.* Was his sickness a result of sin? Possibly. But, let's not take that too far, sickness just happens sometimes as a result of a fallen broken world. However, it's also true that it's sometimes a cause of sickness. Psalms 107:17 says - *Some became fools through their rebellious ways & suffered affliction because of their iniquities.*

Choices definitely can bring pain & bondage to life. Paul claims the Corinthians were falling sick & dying due to their sin of abusing the Lord's Table. But this isn't normative. Jesus only mentions sin in reference to a sickness as a cause to one other person in the New Testament in Mark 2 - the paralyzed man lowered through the ceiling where Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven." And we can't read into that & say his infirmity was due to sin. Another illustration to religious leaders of Jesus' authority & the needs of people.

Nevertheless, Jesus warns this man at the pool, Why? Because isn't it true that when you're freed from a prison, you quickly forget the feeling of bondage? Like the Israelites, we always want to go back to slavery in Egypt. We don't know what to do with freedom, the former life was at least predictable. This week I watched a documentary on Rocio Molina, the top improvisational Flamenco dancer in Spain. She instructs her musicians

not to become too scripted - that to take improvisational tension away in front of an audience robs it of possibility. That anxiety & tension, to perform not knowing what'll happen, is beautiful allowing for power to work through music & dance. A true artist. A picture of the Christian life - not to give up the tension of the unknown allowing the power of Jesus to work - Faith's spelled R.I.S.K.!

Jesus, the Great physician - do we want to be healed? Can we handle freedom & live in tension? Or, when given it, do we return to even stronger prison walls later. Rocia's dance is never rote, allowing for tension of the unknown taking responsibility for freedom. Are you in a prison? Afraid of the responsibility freedom brings? When we're freed from something, we fill it with a better thing, or sin will return in greater force. We don't want to embrace our sin, but rather our Savior.

Some are negligent in the nurture of the spiritual life. We find time for what we want. If we laid out our schedule for the week, would it reflect desire for Jesus? Set free from prison, do you fill that time with spiritually formative practices? We're left empty if we're not filling ourselves with the Word. How do we know how God will direct if we don't read Scripture & listen in prayer? **Most try to break free from their prisons by self-effort. Trying desperately to get into the healing waters of the pool. We've been given everything we need in Christ - only He can heal. It's not enough to show up here, listen to a very eloquent, rousing, intelligent, well thought out sermon given by a skilled handsome orator...or to attend community group. God wants Self-Feeders, who daily commune with Him in Word & prayer. Community's necessary, but limited. We're to self-feed the spiritual life giving Him time to speak. If you don't know how, ask.**

We've developed 10 Spiritual Mentors. They're on the website, ready to meet with you. At the retreats we'll be having 15 minutes one-on-ones with them to talk through our spiritual formation process. They'll give simple direction - doable tools to walk out faith.

Is there someone you've not bent down to help. Spiritual formation's paramount in order to be used by God in the lives of others. Without intimacy with Christ we get paralyzed & overwhelmed by the need. You may not have the power to help them. Jesus does. His power can work through you & through your church body.

Sometimes it's a matter of just saying, "Can I pray for you right now?" Don't say, "I'll pray for you," then walk away. Do it in the moment. Listen to the Holy Spirit - pray encouragement over them. And sometimes, it means the world to just sit & listen.

Finally, be healed. Don't let fear rob you of freedom. Be a healer, bring Jesus to others. Live in risk, live in faith. Say yes to Jesus. Trust Him in the tension of freedom.