

Remnant Life Church

August 27, 2017

John

The Fourth Sign: The Healing of the Lame Man

John 5:1-18

- First sign – turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12)
- The second sign – clearing the temple (John 2:13-25)
- The third sign – the healing of the official's son
- The fourth is the healing of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda

READ – John 5:1-15

- Jesus has returned to Jerusalem in time for an unspecified feast
 - This is noted because John repeatedly ties his narrative of Jesus to a specific feast
 - Chapters 2 (cleansing the temple), 6 (feeding the 5000), and 11 (raising of Lazarus) – Passover
 - Chapter 7 (teaching the people) – Tabernacles
 - Chapter 10 (teaching the unbelieving Jews) – Dedication

Setting

- Most of the readers of this letter in Ephesus would be unfamiliar with the topography of the area John is writing about – so he describes it
 - There was an opening (the Sheep Gate) in the north wall of the city just west of the north-east corner that allowed access to 2 pools
 - Several names have been used from Bethesda to Bethsaida but a discovery published in 1960 found in the Copper Scroll in Qumran (site of the Dead Sea Scrolls) confirms Bethesda
 - Translated to an expression of “house of twin outpourings”
 - John says a pool singular but there were actually 2 pools surrounded by five arcades or colonnades (a series of columns at set intervals that support a roof)
 - This was confirmed by a pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 33 AD and recorded what he saw
 - There were 2 pools lying north and south surrounded by 4 of the colonnades in a rough trapezoid formation with the 5 separating the 2 pools
 - John then tells us that there were a great number of disabled people there (5:3)
 - This number would have increased during a festival time with beggars because of the increase of people
 - People would give money more readily in preparation for the offering of their sacrifice as a “good deed” on the way

- Reason
 - The pools were fed by large reservoirs called Solomon's pools and probably intermittent springs which would have caused the water to ripple
 - It was believed that when this happened an angel of the Lord was stirring the waters
 - The first one into the water would be healed
 - This was a religious superstition that was being kept alive by the desperate

- The man
 - An invalid for 38 years (5:5)
 - May have been brought there every day or just when the waters were expected to stir or just for the time of the festival
 - Jesus noticed Him and "learned" about him (5:6)
 - Jesus never needed information
 - Any time He asked a question it was the benefit of who He was talking to and those listening
 - The word "learned" in the original Greek can be interpreted as either to inquire or to know supernaturally
 - The circumstances of this healing are different than many of the others Jesus performed
 - The man did not know who Jesus was
 - He did not answer Jesus directly
 - Did not show gratitude rather a desire to protect himself
 - He missed the greater opportunity
 - Yet Jesus still singled him out and healed him
 - Those in need that God brings across our paths may not be grateful or even recognize what it is God has us doing – we do it anyway!

- Jesus asks a rather strange question
 - Do you want to be healed? (5:6)
 - Why ask such an obvious question?
 - 2 possibilities to consider
 - First, to emphasize that the first step toward wholeness (physical, emotional, spiritual) is a deep desire
 - The need must be seen
 - Second, to draw out the man's belief that the moving waters would somehow be able to heal him (5:7)
 - There are times we need to have the shallowness of our own beliefs revealed
 - This is a removing of the very obstacles that hinder us in receiving all that God has for us
 - The lame man saw the obstacle as no one to help him in the pool (5:7)
 - For Christians today it is doubt, pride, self-sufficiency, discouragement, impatience, etc...

- Jesus then speaks again
 - But this time it is not a question but a command – “GET UP!” (5:8)
 - Jesus later says that this is the same command that all will hear on the last day as He is teaching His disciples on Life in the Spirit
 - (5:28-29) *Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live*
- Jesus, once again, demonstrates a foundational element of His message and what He has called us to do
 - Like with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the royal official...
 - Jesus had concern for the needs of the individual
 - Not only a message of salvation for the world but needs of each of us every day!
- Jesus then tells the man to pick up his mat and walk (5:8)
 - This, at first reading, may seem to be a natural thing for him to do
 - But it was the Sabbath
 - Mosaic law forbid any work on the Sabbath (5:10)
 - First applied to the vocation of a person
 - But the early Jewish leaders expanded that to define 39 classes of work - included carrying anything from one place to another
 - All of the Synoptic Gospels record the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders – much of it having to do with the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-14; Mk 2:23-3:6; Lk 13:10-17)
 - It became so intense that this became a primary reason they wanted to kill Him
 - Why was Jesus willing to be lenient with these laws?
 - Several possibilities...
 - Jesus and His followers represented a new community, Davidic in its line, but it was the new covenant being lived out and a reinterpretation of the laws, now being fulfilled by Jesus, needed to occur
 - Jesus presence meant that more than the temple was now present and there needed to be a new interpretation of the laws
 - His presence also meant that compassion for hurting people warranted setting aside the rigorous Sabbath laws to demonstrate the greatest of all things – love
- What follows is the man defending himself to the Jewish leaders (5:11-13) and turning Jesus in (5:15)
- Later Jesus finds him (5:14)
 - Stop sinning implying that he was sinning even in his condition (stealing?)
 - Something worse may happen to you

- Jesus is not telling the man that sickness only comes as a result of sin
 - But He is talking about the consequences of our behavior, that sin is destructive and can carry physical infirmities as a consequence
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- What do we take as the two primary points of this story
 - Jesus had compassion for the individual in need and His word was sufficient and powerful to heal
 - The Jewish leaders focused on the wrong things
 - They totally missed the miraculous healing of a man lame for 38 years
 - They only cared about their law being broken and how that would reflect on them
 - Do not miss what God is doing in your life by focusing on the wrong things
 - You might just miss the miracle you have been waiting your whole life for!