**HEALING THE MAN AT THE POOL**

**Speaker:** Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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**Scripture:** John 5:1-9

John 5:1-9

***1*** *After these things, 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, which is called in]Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.****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.]****5****A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.****6****When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?”****7****The 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.”****8****Jesus \*said to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”****9****Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.*

*Now it was the Sabbath on that day.*

Speak to us Lord, for we want to know how You want to take this story, this real life narrative that happened with you, and how you want to touch our lives with it. In Your name as always, we pray, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Beginning with this fifth chapter, we have a kind of a division in the gospel of John. In the prologue, John introduces the life of Jesus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The first 14 verses has to do with the life of Jesus as He came in. and then the first 4 chapters, up to the end of the fourth chapter, has to do with Jesus being presented to the Jews as the promised Messiah.

Then in chapter 5, John begins to trace the growing rejection of the claims of Jesus and a growth of malicious, virulent hostility in officials against the ministry of Jesus. This rejection actually gathers around three very remarkable acts of healing by Jesus. In ch. 5, we have the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda. In ch. 9, we have the amazing account of the opening of the eyes of the man born blind. And then in ch. 11, we have that glorious narrative of Lazarus being raised from the dead. And all of this increases the hostility against Jesus until it finally culminates in His death.

But this particular pool, for many years actually, this pool was lost until it was found about 50 or 60 years ago. It was unearthed and recognized as the pool of Bethesda. And there was this great crowd of people, paralyzed, blind, lame, sick – all waiting for the water to be troubled. And it’s amazing! Out of that crowd, Jesus picks just one person. Did the others not need healing? Yes, they did. But somehow it seems that supernatural healing, the healings that Jesus did and that happen even today, don’t happen carte blanche. They don’t happen at the will of us. It happens in accordance with the will of God. And it happens in various ways, supernatural healing being one of them.

I was reading this book by Dr. Steve Seamands, professor emeritus of Christian doctrine at the Asbury Theological Seminary, titled ‘Follow the Healer’. In it he references the 5 ways that Jesus heals today which used to be talked about by E. Stanley Jones when he was here, and in his writings.

* Jesus heals directly and supernaturally,
* Jesus heals through doctors and medicine,
* Jesus heals through the human body’s own healing power,
* Jesus heals in bestowing grace in suffering, and
* Jesus heals through victorious dying.

All of it has to do with healing.

I remember when a Christian evangelist/healer came to Mumbai about 24 years back. There were lakhs and lakhs of people who went for the entire crusade which lasted about 4 or 5 days. I remember seeing many people healed on that stage. But I also remember walking away at the end of the service, and seeing all the people who didn’t get healed going away. In my mind’s eye, I can still see people in their wheelchairs being wheeled away because healing didn’t come.

Jesus picked one person out of that whole multitude of people. And to this person, he posed this question: Do you wish to get well? Why did Jesus ask this question? It could be that the man was comfortable in his sickness; he had a pallet to sleep on, he probably had money enough for food, he had no responsibilities; he didn’t have to go to work. The Jews believed in giving in three ways – tithes, offerings and alms. And alms went directly to people like this man. So Jesus’ question to him may have been very valid. Do you wish to get well?

I thought of that question, and it’s a good question for us. Sometimes we too get comfortable in our afflictions. We too can get comfortable in the things that are not going well. Sometimes we too can get comfortable with a particular ailment. Why? Because it brings a lot of sympathy; it brings a lot of care. And sometimes people are happy with a crutch that allows other people to take care of them. Maybe they love their weakness, their helplessness, craving the attention of others, ro responsibility as such. And sometimes we too can get caught in that kind of a situation, where we begin to get comfortable in the things that are not going well for us.

And maybe the Lord is saying to us, as we go through the rest of this account, “Do you want to be well?” And if we say, “Not yet, or no, I don’t,” then the rest of this passage has no meaning for us. We may as well get up and leave, because everything after this hinges on the fact that the man was willing. So that question needs to hang here for a bit. Are we ready for a touch from the Lord? are you willing to say, “Yes, Lord. I want to get well. I want to be freed. I want to get fresh vision. I want to gain victory over this addiction. I want to be reconciled. I want my marriage to work. I want to get over negativity, I want….” You fill in the blanks. It’s one of the deepest needs of my heart, Lord, but one that I’ve just allowed to exist with me.

But the man replied, in v. 7, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going, another steps down before me.” Yes, Lord, I want to. I’ve tried. I can’t get there in time. other people beat me to it. And from a human standpoint, it seemed like there was nothing more that he could have tried. He tried everything. He never got to the pool on time. again, that sounds like a situation that we can find ourselves in. Maybe we too have tried everything. And after trying everything, we’ve kind of thrown in the towel and said, “All right. That’s about it. I can’t do anything more. I’ve tried everything.”

And yet, there’s these beautiful lines that are written by this hymn writer that says:

When we have exhauster our store of endurance,

When our strength has failed ere the day is half done;

When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,

Our Father’s full giving is only begun.

Maybe beloved, you’ve lost hope today. Maybe you’re going through the motions just doing what you think you need to do. Maybe you’ve accepted this thing as part of your life, mistakenly even calling it the cross that you must bear; and it couldn’t be further from the truth. maybe it has to do with drinking, smoking, or gambling, or pornography, or marriage, a relationship – something that you’ve just thrown in the towel and said, “this is what it is”. It’s interesting that the Lord put that line. With God, nothing is impossible. I have never seen a connection between that and this until this moment.

What does Jesus say to him? “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” Notice the amazing method that Jesus uses.

1. He asks the man to do an impossible thing.
2. He removes all possibility of a relapse.
3. He expects a continued, sustained, ongoing exercise.

**An impossible thing.**

Rise up. Amazing. You tell a man who can’t do that. Get up, he says. Invariably, as you look through scripture, it seems like God always works in tandem with human involvement and faith. However little that faith is, God wants it exercised. Walk around the walls of Jericho! Step into the Jordan! Strike the rock! Fill the jars with water! Bring the five loaves and two fish! Cast your nets on the other side! All of them resulted in miraculous things. And all of them started with an act of faith. Rise up; get up.

What is it that God wants me to do? What is my act of faith in this particular situation? Is there something that God is expecting me to do?

**No possibility of a relapse.**

Pick up your pallet. It’s almost like Jesus was saying: Get rid of that bed. In other words, there’s no turning back. How often, when something has happened in our life, after some time, we begin to doubt it? did it really happen? And then, because that ‘crutch’ is still around, we go back to that crutch. And what Jesus is saying is: Get rid of it. burn the bridge. Take that mat, that pallet and get rid of it. I don’t want you to go back to that thing.

What is the crutch that I’ve been using all along? Can I throw it away so that I cannot go back to it? Go home and pour out the alcohol? Go home and get rid of the drugs, or get rid of the books, or delete that website, or whatever it is that can draw you back to the place before He touched you? Burn that bridge.

Every time I think of burning bridges, I think of Bartimaeus. I’ve used his example so many times, but it’s so full of meaning. When Bartimaeus shouted out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me,” what did the people tell him? They told him to be quiet. Who were the people telling him to be quiet? They were his benefactors. Bartimaeus depended on people like the crowd for the alms that they would give him. And these people were telling him to be quiet. What did he do? He cried out even more. “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” He threw caution to the wind. He knew that if this didn’t work, he had incurred the ire of the very people who provided for his daily living. He burnt his bridges when he called out to Jesus. And Jesus stopped!

Maybe you’ve come to this situation many times before, but you’ve always been able to go back to that place because that thing is still there. and maybe it’s just a memory that you hold of something that happened to you. And every time you’re able to go back to that memory, you feel all the emotions associated with it. maybe God is saying, “Give Me that memory, hand it over to me. I know you were hurt. I know you got burned. I know you’ve taken so much because of that. but give it to me.” I wonder whether today, you can give it to Him and say, “You take it, Lord. I don’t want to go back to that place again.”

**Keep going.**

Walk. Keep going in the new way. I’ve given you back the ability to walk, now keep going.

That’s how we ought to end. whenever God brings about something in our lives, He touches us, He heals us. He gives us wisdom. Whatever He does, we need to accept it and then walk in that reality, walk in the newness. Rise. Take that step of faith. Burn your bridges, and then walk in this new way that God has opened for us.

Altar Call.

Prayer.