

The Seven Signs of John: Jesus heals the paralytic 5:1-18, 24

Two weeks ago we spoke of Jesus' mother Mary waiting at least 30 years for something good to happen, something that she had precious knowledge of that she had stored away and treasured in her heart while she waited for Jesus to grow into a man and reveal himself to the world as the Son of God and Saviour, Israel's Messiah. The one in whom his disciples put faith in and believed as such so that they received the gift of LIFE, eternal Life, having crossed over from death to life. This morning we stretch the waiting period for another person out to 38 years.

I am wondering, who here this morning has been waiting for 38 years, or even more, for God to come, we are certainly all old enough in years for this to be a real possibility, for Jesus to enter our lives and perform a miracle, a sign that serves to point to Jesus as Son and Saviour? What healing or dramatic turn in circumstances have you been waiting for to finally happen? May each of us take heart this morning from this the third sign in the Gospel of John.

Enter Jesus at the sheep gate of Jerusalem. Only he did not find sheep there but a large group of disabled people consisting of the blind, the lame and the paralysed. He looks around this large group gathered around the Bethesda pool and he selects one. Jesus picks out the one man he considers to be the single neediest person there.

Needy: physically; mentally-emotionally; and spiritually. And it is to all these needs that Jesus will minister in order to heal him and attempt to make him whole, complete with the gift of life, eternal life. But would this man believe and receive the life that was on offer crossing over from death to life?

The man who had been a bed-ridden invalid having been paralysed for 38 years and had never in all those years made it into the pool to be healed when the waters were stirred with the supernatural healing power of God because no one had been there for him to help him to be first down into the pool.

To the surprise of this paralysed man, Jesus walks through the gate and into his life totally unexpected. Who is this guy thinks the paralytic and why is he interested knowing how long I've been like this?

And why has he just asked me right out of nowhere, “Do you want to get well?” What kind of naïve question is that for an obviously weak invalid who is unable to walk and been waiting beside a pool for 38 years trying to be first in to take advantage of the curative powers of the stirred waters. Who wouldn’t want to be healed from such utter helplessness?

Was Jesus really that naïve? No. The Saviour, the Son of God desires to minister to this man’s whole being beginning with his will because 38 long years of waiting, being disappointed day after day from not being able to get into the pool to be cured would have left him rather discouraged. 38 years of discouragement watching person after person getting down into the pool before him, always pipping him. Many who would have been less infirmed or had family or friends helping them in ahead of this man. Person after person being healed right in front of his eyes, practically all of them would have been waiting for a much shorter period of time than himself. If this paralytic had been there 38 years I’m sure he’d witnessed some folk healed on their first day there.

How disappointing for him and how discouraging is that to your heart, mind and spirit. It is no wonder then that Jesus asks him this question, “Do you want to get well?” in order to appeal to his will, to break through a 38 year wall of discouragement which would serve to paralyse him on the inside. Which is why Jesus asks this question, not a lot of small talk here, he goes straight to the heart of the matter to directly challenge this man’s will to be cured, healed and made whole.

So when you consider your own situation, what it is that you have been waiting for to eventuate in your life, for the healing or the miracle to happen, is it something that has been reawakened in your heart and mind today as we’ve read the scripture and heard of Jesus making a bee line for the real issue and ploughing straight into it with the question, “Do you want to get well?” You may very well have lost heart, suffered disappointment and therefore discouragement for so long now, that you have hardened your heart, even allowed doubt and unbelief to enter in, which is the opposite of trusting in God and putting your faith in Jesus Christ his son, believing in him and receiving and experiencing his gift of life. Jesus wants you to have and receive that gift and experience that life today. And maybe the icing on the cake is going to be there with it. The miracle sign, what it is that you’ve been waiting to have happen all

these years. Jesus is here today to ask us the same question “Do you want to get well or do you want to...” you go ahead and fill in the gap. The challenge is here for us today because you may very well be in the same position of this paralysed man in that being asked this question today, you’re quite surprised because you didn’t come to this service this morning to ask Jesus’ help for your own personal issue. I want to say that Jesus is here and he is asking the question of us. Now let’s see what we can learn from the paralysed man and his response as we consider letting Jesus into our own lives afresh.

This paralysed man, just as can happen to us each today, did not in the first instance see Jesus who standing there right in front of him, as a potential healer because he had set his site on the pool with his mind completely focused on the supposed curative powers of the water. In the pool of Bethesda, it was like when someone presses the button on a spa pool that drives the pump to start the bubbles, which is what happened from time to time when the Lord’s spirit disturbed the waters, apparently it was an angel who came from heaven sent by the Lord to press the button. 38 years waiting with no one to help him when the angel came now and again to press the button that stirred the waters to let those there know that the healing power of God was there to cure the one and only first person who entered the pool. In this paralysed man’s reply to Jesus’ question it is obvious to Jesus that he has lost his independent determination because he’s simply waiting there each and every day for somebody to be there at the right time and come and help him by assisting him into the water when it is stirred. Any effort that he’d made over the last 38 years had proved to be futile leaving him with a sense of utter despair because he knew that he could never succeed on his own, by his own strength and he got to witness to himself and remember it every time the water is stirred and he’s desperately trying to get in the pool unaided, but, someone else always gets in and goes down into the moving waters ahead of him.

Could this be you this morning having spent the last 38 years or so witnessing others have the desires of their heart met, seeing others have their prayers answered seemingly being ahead of you in the queue for experiencing God’s miraculous intervention? Maybe you are now despairing too, discouraged even to the point where you may believe

that God doesn't care about you and what it is that you are waiting for, wanting to be changed in your life. You've personally tried to say and do everything that you could with your own resources to have things changed, be different, bring about the miracle, but those resources, internal and external are now spent.

This morning Jesus is able to do for you as he does for this man. Literally you will not have to "Pick up your mat, or your pew, and walk" which this man did, immediately knowing in his body that he'd been instantly cured, healed not only from his paralysis, but his leg muscles ligaments, tendons, nerves and everything else necessary had been restored to health and fitness so that he could do what he did on his own without any help from anyone else except the power of Jesus' words to him. He picks up his mat and he walks as a man.

Jesus had just asked him to do the impossible without him having any real faith of his own beforehand. He had just walked because he had been miraculously cured and renewed by the power of God and not only this but it would seem that Jesus has gone as far to supply and give this surprised man with no real faith of his own, the will to be cured, without having asked for it in the first place.

As you read through the gospels and the miracles that Jesus performed the usual scenario is that faith in Jesus was necessary for a healing to occur, for someone to be cured. But not in this case because this man didn't even know who Jesus was at the time when he enters his life. Although it was Jesus' usual practice to heal only in response to faith, this sign, this miracle points us to Jesus as God who is not limited by a person's lack of faith, which serves as good news for us! Each in our own situation, even where we have lost faith or never even had it to begin with, due to disappointment, discouragement and having allowed doubt and unbelief creep in to paralyse us in the area of faith and trust in God. God in Jesus by the power of his spirit can come today, even on our Sabbath, this Sunday morning to refresh and renew your spirit, even bringing you his words of power that will heal you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to work in that helpless situation that you despair of every seeing change or have the miracle occur.

I want God to come, even on this day to work in our lives in this way and as God does, you won't be in trouble with the elders as this man was in trouble with the Jewish religious leaders for receiving your miracle on the Sabbath. In order to be right with God don't forget to express your gratitude to Jesus for any healing received or miraculous intervention in your life. The paralysed man seems to have felt no real gratitude to Jesus for his healing and not only that but took no responsibility for working on the Sabbath, rolling up his bed mat and walking with it in the site of all.

Jesus had slipped away in the crowd to avoid the controversy of breaking the Sabbath law but later on, he tracks the man down at the temple. "See you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." Jesus actually searched the man out until he found him because he was not yet finished because this man had not yet received the full miracle of Life. The paralysed man may have been healed physically and mentally-emotionally in the area of his will but not yet spiritually because this man had only confessed him as his healer. In saying what he said to him Jesus revealed himself as the Saviour and Son of God desiring that this man would now come to terms with his inner spiritual sinful state, which needed to be made right with God by confessing it and repenting from it and turning to him as his Saviour as well as healer, believing in Jesus word with his healing being the sign that points to Jesus as Saviour, God's son.

Jesus didn't want something worse to happen to him being the eternal consequences of sin which were by far more serious than his paralysis or any other physical infirmity that you can think of. Jesus wanted this man saved and in a right spiritual relationship with his heavenly Father. And the thing is the scripture doesn't actually tell us if the man stopped sinning and actually put his faith in Jesus, believing that he is the Son of God. Jesus desired that he would, just as he desires that you and I would, that by believing we might have life in his name which is the miracle of eternal life that each and every one of us can receive and testify to this morning. "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears Jesus' word and believe God the Father who sent him has eternal life and will not be judged for such a one has crossed over from death to life."

God in Jesus today shows care and concern entering people's lives to perform miracles as signs that point to him as Saviour.

To encourage you I will share this story to close with, a story that was picked up by world media on January 25th, 2014.

A 20-year old student Joel Haler, an athlete and well known basketballer, who attended Hope College in Michigan, USA was in a health class in October 2013 when he heard a 'loud pop' in his back while doing an 'Insanity workout' which is an exercise routine. The next day he woke up and was paralyzed from the waist down. Haler was unable to walk and was confined to a wheelchair. He quickly realized, "I'm paralyzed now. I'm just going to have to start getting used to this". A few days later Joel moved home to Indiana, and began to question his Christian faith, 'God, why are you doing this to me?' He soon began to despair, mentally and emotionally with depression, and spiritually.

A couple of months later, in early January, 2014 he had a dream in which he saw a big banner that said 'J23', however he couldn't work out the significance. He went through all the books of the bible beginning with J in an attempt to decipher the meaning behind 'J23' but got nothing. A week later he was at a church and a four-year-old boy named Braxton walked up to him and said, "Joel, you're going to walk on a Thursday."

So Joel goes home, and sceptically looks at a calendar, first June, then July and lastly, January to discover that January 23rd, 'J23' was this coming Thursday. Only then did he really begin to trust God, once again putting his faith in Jesus. All of a sudden he'd never been so confident in something in his entire life. Joel didn't really sleep at all on the Wednesday night and said just after 3am on January 23 he felt tingling in his toes. He then felt an intense pain working its way up his legs. An hour and a half later it had reached his waist. That's when he decided to swing his legs over the side of the bed, stand up and walk. Considering he had been wheelchair-bound for three months, he had all the strength he needed to instantly walk again, straight to his parent's bedroom to wake them and tell them what's happening.

The next day, Friday he then drives himself to the gym where he'd been going most every day for 3 months but this time instead of wheeling himself through the door in his wheel chair, he walked in, much to the astonishment of everyone there. An event filmed and reported by TV news and a miracle made known to the world through the media.

Joel says it is a miracle and has given all the credit to God for his healing and recovery. He is still walking today with the pain completely gone. "There are people who will say this is impossible", he says but, "I want to encourage them."

So may we all be encouraged this morning by both the paralysed man at the pool's healing and Joel's too, whether it's 3 months or 38 years you've been waiting, despairing, God is here in the spirit of Christ to enter you life's circumstance and bring you a sign that points to Jesus as the Saviour, the son of God.

Will you trust God and believe, putting your faith in Jesus Christ today, so that you might have life in his name!