

Teaching Points

We now move on to the third sign in John's gospel. This is another healing performed by Christ. Let's consider the details surrounding this amazing event.

The location of the miracle is by the pool of Bethesda. Our text tells us that this was a place where many sick people gathered in hopes of finding relief in the waters of the pool.

**Please note, there are some manuscript families that do not contain part of verse 3 and all of verse 4. That means that some manuscripts include the details about the water being stirred up by an angel while others do not. We believe that these verses are dubious - they may not belong in the Bible. Whether or not they were part of John's gospel originally doesn't change any significant part of this story - neither does it undermine the inerrancy of Scripture. (If you have more questions about these please see Pastor Jeff or Tim and we can explain further.)*

The object of the miracle was "a certain man" who sat by the pool. Consider this man's plight:

1. This unnamed man had suffered from a debilitating infirmity. The fact that verse 8 mentions the man's bed, along with Christ's command for him to rise up and walk seems to imply that he was paralyzed in some way.
2. The man had suffered in this condition for 38 years. Just think how that would wear on you. Perhaps the man had hopes of being healed at some point - but after nearly 40 years it's likely that he had lost all hope of ever being relieved from his suffering.

Discussion Question: Why does John highlight the length of time this man suffered under this affliction?

Thoughts: *We believe this highlights the stark contrast between the hopelessness of the man and the awesome power of Jesus. 38 years is enough time to erode any optimism this man may have had. At this point he had likely resigned himself to his circumstances; accepting the fact that he would die in this condition. It's against this backdrop of hopelessness and helplessness that Jesus shows His compassion and power.*

3. See how alone the man is. He tells Jesus in verse 7 that he has "no man" to help him. It seems that everyone near the pool had some expectation that entering into the waters would relieve or heal them in some way (whether it was an actual angelic miracle or just the perception/tradition of the people). The man had apparently tried to get into the water on several occasions, but each time he found himself cut off by others and left alone to suffer.

Jesus, as **the author of the miracle**, appears in these verses to be seeking out this suffering man. Verse 6 says that Jesus “...**saw [the man] lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time...**” Here is the sovereign savior of humanity. The man doesn’t appear to be looking for Jesus - it’s the other way around. Jesus seeks this man out and approaches him. Also, Jesus was familiar with the man’s suffering, for He already knew the details of his affliction. This is a picture of Luke 19:10, “...**for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**”

Jesus asks the man a very intriguing question, “**Do you want to be made well?**”

Discussion Question: Why does Jesus ask this question? What does He observe in this man that prompts this enquiry?

Thoughts: *This seems to be Christ’s way of addressing the condition of the man’s will. To everyone else at the pool this man appeared to have a paralyzed body but Jesus was able to see a deeper and more severe problem - this man had a paralyzed will. In other words, this man had no hope. This is the picture of someone who has given up and can do nothing more than sit in their misery. Jesus is about to heal the man’s body - but He aims at much more than this. Christ is the one who can heal the crippled heart.*

Verses 9-16 tell us about the reaction of some of the Jews. Sadly, they are offended at this miracle! Instead of rejoicing in the mercy of Jesus or celebrating the glorious power of God, these people decide to complain about the miracle being performed on the Sabbath.

Discussion Question: This is a complaint that comes up several times in Christ’s ministry. Why were the Jews offended when Jesus healed people on the Sabbath?

Thoughts: *The Pharisees had taken the law of Moses and added their own man-made traditions on top of it. Instead of faithfully observing the things God had commanded, they decided to attach burdensome requirements to the law. Their view of the Sabbath is an example of this. They didn’t teach the Sabbath as a day of rest where men ought to repose in God and worship Him. Instead, they observed the Sabbath as a restrictive day in which acts of mercy were considered unlawful. Jesus had no problem violating their traditions. He plainly told them that, “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**” (Mark 2:27)*

The worst part about their reaction is their lack of compassion for the healed man. It’s startling to see these people complain about a miraculous healing. Didn’t anyone stop to think about the incredible nature of what just happened? The religious leaders of the Jews were supposed to be the people who were closest to God - but they proved to be the most unwilling to glorify Him for miracles like this.

Finally, notice Christ's follow-up with the healed man. Verse 14 says, ***"Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.'"***

First, Jesus is the one seeking the man again! Jesus found the man, which means Jesus was looking for him again.

Secondly, Jesus warns the man about sin and greater consequences. The warning seems to indicate that continuing to live in sin would result in a worse consequence than anything the man had suffered so far. God's wrath that burns toward sin is worse than any physical affliction in this world. Faith in Christ is the only way to escape this dreadful judgment of God.

Praise God that this is precisely what Jesus came to absorb on our behalf! As believers, we will never experience the judgment of God because Christ was judged in our place.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for the way Jesus takes the first step toward us. He seeks and saves the lost - even those who were not looking for Him.

Praise God for the healing that we receive in our souls. Jesus has done the greatest work in healing our hearts/wills.

Praise God for His sovereign wisdom. Perhaps some of us have suffered for a long time (similar to this man). Even so, we can know that Christ is sovereign over our pain - and He will bring us home to be with Him in such a way that there will be no more pain or tears.