

The Great Physician—of Our Souls!

Portraits of Jesus – John 5

January 31, 2021

DAY 1: The invalid is healed

John 5:2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³ Here a great number of disabled people used to lie--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

1. There was a legend that the waters in this pool called Bethesda at healing properties. It was believed by some that when the waters were stirred by an angel, the first person to get in the pool would be healed. That is why a “great number” of disabled people were there.

2. There is nothing in the scriptures that would validate this kind of superstition.

John 5:6 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?"

3. This may seem like an odd question, as you'd answer, “Well, of course I want to get well.” However, when talking to people today and offering to provide help to change their circumstances, it is amazing how many people say, “No thanks. I'm good. I'm fine.”

4. Why do you think Jesus asked this man that question? What would Jesus have hoped would happen?

John 5:7 "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."

5. This is the reply to Jesus' question if he wants to be healed. Does anything strike you as odd about the man's response?

John 5:8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

6. Besides the obvious miracle do you see any significance in “picking up his mat”? Or, any significance to the command to walk?

John 5:9a At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

7. What strikes you from today's episode?

DAY 2: What does sin look like? An outward and inward look at human sin

1. It's been said for a number of years that "if the president of the U.S. that you don't like discovered the cure for cancer, you'd still find a reason to criticize him."

John 5:9b The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

2. This is a man who had been a paralytic for thirty-eight years. He is wondrously healed, and now can walk about Jerusalem. What strikes you about the response of the Jewish leaders?

3. What's missing from their response? What seems to be most important to them?

John 5:11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" ¹² So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

4. Outward sin: what did sin look like in the leaders' relating to the man? What visibly missing?

5. Inward sin: what was going on in the hearts of these men? What was driving them? What were the things sooooo important to them? What things were missing?

John 5:13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

6. What strikes you about this man having "no idea" who healed him?

John 5:14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

7. Sometimes there is no direct cause and effect of why we suffer. But, sometimes we bring about suffering through our foolish choices. It's doubtful that Jesus and the paralytic had ever met before, yet, Jesus knew the man's history and how he became a paralytic. If you were this man, and just heard what Jesus said to you in v. 14, what would have gone through your mind?

8. Jesus warned the man about a much more profound truth. Sin does not just bring consequences and suffering in this life, but consequences carry over into the next life, in hell. This is a call to the man to take sin seriously. Do whatever you can to run from it, and to seek righteousness.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The unique relationship of God the Father and Son (John 5:16-23)

1. In this next section of John 5, Jesus helps explain real “life” is. It exists in the Father and exists in the Son. The Son wants to give real life to people. We are made to find this “life” and experience it. What is that “life” Jesus is talking about?

2. Though this “life” has many components, I’d like to highlight what I consider the most important ones: -- satisfaction, deepest joy, deepest purpose, the truths that anchor us, the power to live holy, the power to love people like Jesus and the power to reflect the character of God to the people around us.

3. Jesus is trying to explain to the Jewish leaders who He is, and the special and unique relationship He has with God. Under each of the four sections below, jot down what Jesus is saying about the unique relationship He has with God the Father.

John 5:16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John 5:19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

*John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and **gives them life**, even so **the Son gives life** to whom he is pleased to give it.*

(It is this verse that couples this section with the one we’ll look at tomorrow!)

John 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

4. We will have difficulty understanding what Jesus is teaching if we inadvertently forget He is God the Son, not just a Jewish rabbi.

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Real “life” for people.

*John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has eternal life** and will not be condemned; he **has crossed over from death to life**.*

²⁵ *I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and **those who hear will live**. J*

²⁶ *For **as the Father has life in himself**, so **he has granted the Son to have life in himself**.*

²⁸ *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out--those who have done good will **rise to live**, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*

1. Jesus contrasts life and death. The contrast is made in couplets, both physical life and death and spiritual/personal life and death.
 2. Both life and death have their affects in this life and in the next life. We get “sample” tastes of both realities in this life.
 3. The greatest operation of God through His Son, His agent, is getting essential life into humanity where it can be chiefly displayed to those who live in darkness and spiritual death.
- “...he has crossed over from death to life.”**
4. One of the key motifs in the book of John is “life.” It is the life of Jesus alive in the heart of man that allows us to taste the joy and satisfaction for which our souls hunger.
 5. What is added here is the reminder of “where we’ve been,” “death.” Death is to be cut off from all the resources that make for life. It is to have no ability to devotedly relate to God or sacrificially love others without clinging to the vested interests that drive our sinful nature, and thus tarnish all that we touch.
- “...has crossed over...”**
6. The Greek verb (Metabebeken) means to change one’s country or place of residence.
 7. One of God’s mercies and warnings to lost people is to allow them to get foretastes of hell while on this earth.
 8. When we experience the misery of sin, or a “living hell” it is God shouting at us to stop and consider our ways. To “live” in sin and experience its consequences is to experience a type of “death”.
 9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: 5 witnesses

1. The identity of Jesus is crucial to understanding the Christian faith. If Jesus be no more than a mortal man, the power of the Christian life is unplugged. It becomes no more than an ethic to which we may strive to achieve but will continue to fail to achieve.
2. The words “testimony: and “testify” occur seventy-seven times in John’s writings.
3. Jesus’ claim about Himself is divinity. In this passage He presents five witnesses (testimonies) to His divinity. Underline each of the five in this passage.

John 5:31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.

³² *There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.*

³³ *"You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.*

³⁵ *John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.*

³⁶ *"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.*

³⁷ *And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,* ³⁸ *nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.*

³⁹ *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.*

These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ *yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*

⁴² *but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.*

⁴³ *I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.* ⁴⁴ *How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?*

⁴⁵ *"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.* ⁴⁶ *If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.*

⁴⁷ *But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*

4. Here are the five testimonies about the identity of Jesus:

- John the Baptist (5:33-35)
- Jesus’ works (5:36)
- God, the Father (5:37)
- Scriptures (5:39-40)
- Moses (5:45-47)

“...yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life...” (5:40)

5. The problem is never a lack of knowledge. God writes His word on every heart. The conscience whispers His truths to us. We glean something of the wonder and majesty of God by gazing at our beautiful world. The problem is always the same—a stubborn will that refuses to be convinced. (See Jer. 16:12).

6. Why do people refuse to come to Christ? In one sense, they are *entrenched* in another narrative. Their view about God, life and human nature points them inward instead of upward. Even people who are “outward” toward others are motivated by the inward result rather than the upward Source.

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?