**WITH JESUS** (Week 4, January 31, 2018)

**Getting to Know Jesus Through the Gospel of John**

**John 5:1-18**

**Background for the Passage**

1. Archeological excavations have determined that near the Jerusalem gate mentioned in John 5:2 were two pools with five covered colonnades. These open structures provided some cover and shelter from the weather, but were treated as public gathering areas.

2. The life of a disabled person in first century Israel was bleak. There was no government assistance, no job training programs, and no education or employment. A person with a significant disability was either supported financially by family or friends, or would be forced to beg in a public area, seeking charity from strangers.

3. The pools offered both a public area to beg, that was covered and sheltered from the weather, and the opportunity to possibly be healed. The pools were fed by underground springs, and at times, would bubble up with some water under a bit more pressure than usual. The legend had developed that this bubbling was evidence of an angel, and that whoever made it into the water first after the bubbling appeared would be healed.

4. Some manuscripts add an expanded conclusion to verse 3 and all of verse 4: *“waiting for a certain movement of the water, 4for an angel of the Lord came from time to time and stirred up the water. And the first person to step in after the water was stirred was healed of whatever disease he had.”* This textual variant is one of the few in the NT, and may have been added by John or someone close to him at a slightly later time to explain the legend associated with the pool to those not familiar with Jerusalem. As all of the other textual variants, the meaning or power of the text are not impacted by the exclusion of this verse in anyway.

5. The paralyzed man had a very difficult physical reality, but his problem went beyond his paralyzed condition. He had become so accustomed to his helpless state, that he had stopped even trying to be healed. He apparently had stopped trying to get into the pool, had not lined up anyone to help him, and did not even seem to want to help himself. His situation seemed hopeless, until Jesus chose to interact with him out of all of the disabled people in that place.

6. Jesus question to the paralyzed man should jolt us a bit*. (“Do you want to get well?” 5:6 NLT, or “Do you want to be made well?” 5:6 NIV.)*  This question demonstrated again that Jesus would not force himself on anyone, but rather helped only those who are willing to be helped. It also was meant to jolt the man out of his passivity and apathy, and force him to truly evaluate IF he wanted to be healed. The healing that Jesus offered would not just be a physical healing, but would go far beyond that temporary reality. Jesus was going to bring not just a physical healing, but was also offering a radical spiritual healing that would lead to eternal life, but only if the individual trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

7. The man indirectly answered Jesus by explaining that he had no one to help him get into the pool, so someone else always got the miracle. In this statement though, the man admitted that he was helpless and needed help and healing, as he could not do it himself. Jesus offered help, but not exactly the help that the man probably expected.

8. Jesus words in 5:8 were an authoritative command, but also incredibly compassionate and kind. After many years of waiting, the man would not have to wait to be healed any longer. After losing his hope, Jesus wasted no time in giving the man not only his hope back, but joy and healing as well. And the miracle happened…. “instantly!”

9. The action of carrying his sleeping mat represented the man’s freedom, but soon became the opportunity for others to impose limitations again. This miracle should have been the focus of all the Jews in Jerusalem, proclaiming and confirming that the Messiah was present and powerful. It should have served the same purpose as other signs and miracles during the ministry of Jesus; to affirm and confirm that Jesus is/was the Son of God. (John 20:30-31, Isa. 35:5-6) Instead, the violation of the Sabbath rules became the focus, and quickly challenges, accusations, and blame-shifting began. The legalistic Jewish leaders did not allow God in the flesh to break their rules by healing this man directly, as it then caused the man to sin by working on the Sabbath.

10. The Jewish leaders accusation that it wasn’t lawful for the miracle man to carry his sleeping mat on the Sabbath was quite a stretch of what the Bible actually taught. (Ex. 20:8-10) After centuries of human efforts to determine exactly what “keeping the Sabbath” meant, taking a day of rest had become a ton of work. By the first century, the legalistic ways to keep the Sabbath had become a massive burden instead of a joyful day of rest.

11. Jesus found the man later in the temple. Perhaps the man had gone there to thank God for the miracle or to seek the one who had done the miracle, but we just don’t know. Jesus’ words to the man are quite ominous, *“stop sinning or something even worse may happen to you.” (5:14)*

Jesus sought out the healed man to warn him that a physical healing was good, but temporary. A spiritual healing and commitment to resist sin was necessary. If the man did not respond in faith and believe/know Jesus, something far worse than thirty-eight years of being paralyzed would be an eternity separated from God. The man needed to turn away from sin, turn toward Jesus, and live a “normal” life.

12. This miracle and the fact that Jesus did it on the Sabbath infuriated the Jewish leaders, and they began/continued to plot against Him. Their power was threatened, and they lashed out in response.

**Review Questions**

13. (5:1-2) Where was Jesus just before this? Why did he go to Jerusalem? Where did he choose to enter the city? What/Who was he going to encounter?

14. (5:3-4) Who was present there? What’s a textual variant? What is added if we include the textual variant? Why is it left out of the NLT?

15. (5:5-6) Who did Jesus notice near the pool, and why did He choose him? What was his condition? What did Jesus know and what did He say?

16. (5:7-8) What was the man’s response? What did his response indicate? How did Jesus respond? How was the man healed? Why did Jesus command the man to carry is mat?

17. (5:9-10) How long did Jesus take to heal the man? When was the man healed? What did he do in response to the healing? Why is this initial obedience a good sign? Why does it matter on what day this happened? Who objected? Why? What’s the problem?

18. (5:11-13) How did the man respond to the criticism? How is his response both the truth and also a bit of blame-shifting? Why did he respond this way? What were the Jewish leaders choosing to focus on in this situation?

19. (5:14-15) Why did Jesus need to find the man, and where was He? What did Jesus say to the man, and what does it mean? What is meant by “something worse?” Though the man had been healed physically, what still needed to happen?

20. (5:16-18) Why did the Jewish leaders focus on the Sabbath violations instead of the miracle? What trap were they caught in? How did Jesus respond? Why did this only make the Jewish leaders even more angry?

**So What?**

\*21. What led Jesus to the paralyzed man instead of any of the other disabled people at the pool? Why did Jesus choose to speak to this guy? What was different? What trait do you see in Jesus that may encourage you?

\*22. What did the man carrying his sleeping mat indicate? From what did Jesus set him free? From what have you been set free? How do you respond when Jesus tells you to “stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!?”

23. What do the words of Jesus in 5:14 indicate? Why is physical healing not enough? What trait of Jesus is apparent in this warning? Have you ever experienced this quality from the Lord?