

Bethesda

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 September 2019

Preacher: Rev. Nigel Anderson

[0 : 0 0] We'll turn back with me to John chapter 5. I'd like to consider with you this evening the healing of the invalid at the pool, the pool Bethesda.

I know some like a verse to latch on to, so the verse, there will be verse 6, where we read that when Jesus saw him, saw the invalid lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, do you want to be healed?

You know more than I do, but you know that for almost 35 years the name Bethesda has carried a very, well, a massive significance in the island of Lewis.

Many of course have the reform memories and contested to the blessing that Bethesda has given the hospice, that their denomination founded in 1985, the hospice to provide physical and spiritual care for patients in the name of the Lord Jesus.

For almost 35 years the name Bethesda has been a byword here for mercy. The name means, literally means, house of mercy.

[1 : 2 3] And so I pray that Bethesda will continue to be that house of mercy for many more years to come. Well in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, the original Bethesda, Bethesda was a small pool in the very north of the city.

In that place was a place, a house of mercy. And in that house of mercy Jesus came to bring mercy, to give mercy to someone who was unable to heal himself.

And of course Jesus came not simply to bring physical healing, but above all to bring that spiritual healing that that man desperately needed, the healing that he suffered as we all suffer with, the healing of the suffering of sin.

And there, there at the pool of Bethesda, that man, that crippled man, was healed by the Lord of mercy. And that healing, as you know in all of Jesus' healings, that healing that pointed to Jesus and who he is, the Lord, the Savior, the Christ, the one who came to bring healing through, healing eternal healing to all who are in him, who are sick, the sickness of sin.

And Jesus in that act of healing us will see in a moment Jesus healing there at the pool of Bethesda. Showing that he is the Lord of mercies, that he is the Lord of grace.

[2 : 5 9] And this evening as we come again, you've read the story, heard the story many times, but as we acquaint ourselves again with this miracle of healing, that we look yes to the healing, but above all look beyond the healing, look to the Lord Jesus.

Look to him who gave the miracle, whose power enabled that miracle to happen. And of course to consider the one who was healed, to consider his need, his great need.

And yes, to consider yourselves in relation to the question that Jesus asked as we read there in verse 6, do you want to be healed?

Jesus addressed that question to that individual man, but the question still asked, do you want to be healed? And again we'll think of the consequence of the ramifications of that question, do you want to be healed?

But let's take the context first of all, because as Jesus is undertaking his ministry, both in Galilee and in Jerusalem, he's demonstrating his credentials as the Messiah, as the one, the same one, the one who came from heaven to earth, the one who was promised of all, promised in Old Testament times, the one who was promised to save his people from their sins, the one who came as Redeemer, the one who came to deliver God's people from darkness, to bring them into light.

[4 : 3 1] And Jesus has now come, he's fulfilled the promises given in the Old Testament, the New Testament reveals the promised Savior, the promised Christ. And Jesus has come, and by his healing even before he goes to the cross, he's shown by his healing who he is.

He's come to give sight to the blind, he's come to make the deaf hear us at where, to bring that true spiritual healing that you need, that I need.

He's come to be the once for all sacrifice for sins, to satisfy God's justice. And the miracles pointing to Jesus in that capacity of who Jesus is, he's the one who will take your sins, my sins upon himself, and in that great transaction, in his taking upon himself our sins, that we will be given his righteousness.

So Jesus has come to do all that for your sake, for our sake, but before that, giving of himself in the cross, Jesus will demonstrate who he is, what he's come to do even in these acts of healing. And immediately before this particular act of healing, I mean there are other examples of healing, the most immediate one in fact with your Bibles in chapter 4 verse 46, there of the healing of the nobleman's son, the official son.

[6 : 06] This is happening just before Jesus goes from Galilee, and he goes, we're told, up to Jerusalem, sort of physically up, it's actually geographically south.

But anyway the point is that Jesus has gone from one place to perform an active healing, and he's now gone to Jerusalem, and gone to this particular place in Jerusalem, the pool at Bethesda. The nobleman's son has been healed by the word of Jesus. Jesus has already demonstrated who he is, and Jesus again is going to show truly who he is, and he's going to show that he's healed, not of a nobleman's son this time, but a poor, inviolated, a man whose need was great, and whom Jesus addressed that need in his healing of that man physically, and of healing of that man spiritually. So Jesus as we said is on that journey, he's moved from the northern Galilee, but now he's gone back, gone to the capital in Jerusalem. In all probability he's gone to Jerusalem to attend one of the feasts there, but there Jesus will show that he is the Lord of mercy.

Now of course whether it's in Galilee, whether it's in Jerusalem, whether it's here in Calyphe, wherever it is, that the Lord Jesus shows his power, he gives that power, he shows that he is the Lord of mercy, even in saving sinners such as ourselves.

[7 : 41] We're here to gaze on the Lord Jesus, to magnify him, to give glory for our Saviour, even the One who heals us of our sickness and our sins, even if Psalm 103 tells us of the Lord who does these mighty works.

But let's focus on the passage. Let's look first of all at the scene that Jesus saw as we read from verse 2 down to the first half of verse 6.

As we said Jesus has gone a wee bit beyond the temple area, he's come to this enclosed pool, and you can even now use your imagination as you picture in your mind what Jesus saw.

It's a most pitiful and pitiable sight, the most depressing sight that meets Jesus. This large number of people, this large number of disabled people, there are blind people, there are lame people, there are paralysed people, they're all around this very relatively small area, and they're waiting for something to happen in the water.

They're waiting for that water in the pool to be stirred up, and waiting for someone to help them get into that water and be healed. But this man, this man, this invalid, is the man whom Jesus directs his love and his saving grace to.

[9 : 12] This man is singled out by Jesus, this man who's been an invalid for 38 years, and in these 38 years not once has he been able to get into that water.

Nobody's been willing to help him. But Jesus takes pity on this man, this solitary, helpless individual, nobody's bothered about for 38 years.

You might even say in that picture that even you see in your mind's eye is the word gives us. That great large number of people lying there, waiting for that pool for the waters to be stirred in that pool.

You might even say isn't that a picture of the mass of humanity, humanity in its pitiful state of helplessness because of sin, because of sin.

And in that physical sight, that great number waiting to be cured of their illnesses. Even in the greater picture we come to realise that that picture tells us of the far greater picture of all who desperately need the Lord Jesus, a saviour, the desperate need for Jesus to lead into him, to bring the water of life into their lives, to be cleansed of sin, to be healed, to be made whole.

[10 : 42] And so the great need of mankind even, we might say, revealed there in that picture of these, those people who are in desperate need there at the pool of Bethesda.

But then we find something that really alerts us to what Jesus is there for. From the middle of verse 6 down to verse 9 we see the searching words of Jesus.

These words that we've read already we'll read again. Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be made whole? I mean at the very centre we might say of this healing is a question.

You might even say that the miracle hinges on this question. Here's Jesus asking this man a man in his powerlessness, in that man's powerlessness. It's a question that yes Jesus is asking that individual, but it's a question that Jesus asks each one of us whether you're a Christian, in your need of healing, perhaps a particular sin in your life that's so rooted in your heart, or indeed if you're not yet a Christian, the question applies to you.

Do you want to be healed? Healed of your sin, healed of your separation from God. Well let's look at the immediate asking of this question that when Jesus asked that question to the invalid at the pool.

[12:07] Now of course you might say well it sounds like an obvious question. Jesus says do you want to be healed? Of course the man wants to be healed.

I mean the way that the man expresses himself, well the man knows that it's impossible for him to be healed. He's in a paralysed state.

He can't get into the water by himself, no one's there to help him. But in that man's answer, the man answers, I'm going to put me into the pool, the water stirred up, and when the water stirred up, while I'm going other steps before me, you can see the sort of pathos in that man's answer.

The sort of pathetic nature of that man's answer. But surely what Jesus is doing here in that question, he's probing that man's heart.

As he's probing, even you this evening, probing you with that same question. Because of course the question implies that it's only Jesus who can work the work of the miracle in that man's life.

[13:15] It's only Jesus who can heal that man. And it's only Jesus through Jesus that you can be healed. And of course this question here, it goes beyond the physical condition of that man.

It goes to the very condition of his soul. So here's Jesus testing that man's need. Jesus leading that man to say that yes, his bodily needs are important.

He's got greater need. The need of his very soul, the very health of his very soul. Later of course in verse 14, Jesus speaks about sin to that man.

But for the moment, Jesus is taking that initiative. He's going to reach the point of that man's ultimate need.

But before that happens, Jesus is going to have compassion on that man's physical needs. And more importantly, that man's spiritual needs.

[14:19] You know that question, do you want to be made whole? Do you want to be healed? The question can equally be looked at in the sense that you want to be healthy.

Do you want to have that true health, that true well-being? Or do you want to be completely healed, completely whole? I mean, that invalid knew he was ill.

He knew he was physically disabled. He'd been 38 years with his disability. You might say it was a double life sentence. But what if he was just healed of his physical illness?

Was he going to be truly satisfied? Was he going to know complete healing in his life? So you see the question Jesus is asking. Jesus wants to probe that man's heart.

And so he begins with a physical healing in order to show that man that that man's greatness need is spiritual.

[15:19] Far more important than even physical healing. That man must be made whole. Every part of him, yes, there's immediate physical need, but above all, the need of his very soul.

Well, apply that question in your own life. Do you want to be healthy? Do you want to be made whole? Do you really want to be healed of that?

Are all these things that have caused so much darkness in your life? Do you really want to be healed of that which has kept you from a close walk with God?

Do you really want to know that salvation that only Jesus can give if you believe in Him? See, if you're not a Christian, that question is for you. Do you want to be healed?

Do you want to be healed of that which has separated you from God? Do you want to be healed of that sin or those sins that have so blighted your life and you know that they're blighting your life?

[16:23] Do you want to be healed of that which you cannot heal yourself from? Because your spiritual need is greater than any physical need that you have.

Now, I am not minimizing any physical need. Absolutely not. I am not minimizing the physical needs of this man.

But don't you see that what is truly important, what truly must be healed is your heart, your very heart, your very life, your very soul, and we made whole by faith in the Lord Jesus. Do you want to be healed?

But you know the sad thing is, or the realistic thing is, this is a question that doesn't presume a yes, a yes answer. Because you see, there are many people who don't see the need of healing.

Who don't see that the greatest need that they have is that healing of their souls, healing from the power of sin. Yes, whether it's somebody who we might say has lived a particularly violent or cruel life, or whether it's somebody who has the utmost respect in society.

[17 : 40] But yet at the same time see no need to be healed. Because there is no admission of being a sinner. When sin is not acknowledged, the feeling that I don't need a Savior, I don't need the Lord Jesus to come into my life.

But only when sin is acknowledged, only when you cry out, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, then you'll know that you'll need healing, and you'll turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can bring that healing into your life, and will do so by the power of his love, and forgive you your sins.

But there's also that reaction, when there is that confrontation, when Jesus makes that claim that he can and wants to change your life, and there's that reaction, I don't want to be changed.

I don't want to live and give up my life, or give up those things that have held so dear, you know like the rich young ruler when he was asked to give up, when he held so dear when he was asked to give up his money, and he said, I can't follow Jesus, I can't follow you Jesus, I don't want to be made whole in the Lord Jesus.

And if there's anyone here this evening, if you're clinging to something that you simply can't let go of, that's a thing that's even separating you from the Lord Jesus.

[19 : 15] Give it up. Allow Jesus into your life. Allow his love to reach the very depth of your heart. Allow him, open your heart, open your eyes to see Him, and know a new life that's precious, that's more valuable than anything else in the whole world.

But you know, that question that Jesus asks, do you want to be healed, is asked to you, who are a Christian? Do you really want to be healed of that pexin in your life that maybe you're returning to again and again that forbidden fruit that you feel that somehow your life wouldn't be as fulfilled as perhaps you think it can be with that forbidden fruit?

And if you profess to follow the Lord Jesus, well, he's asking you the same question, do you want to be healed? He's challenging you to look at your life, that even you search your hearts.

The convenience coming in a short time, examine yourself, test your heart, test your life. Allow God to probe the very depth of your heart.

Ask him, Lord, is there a sin that's lurking there that has to be removed? And of course, who alone can remove that sin but the great physician?

[20 : 45] Who can and will heal you of that particular sickness? Maybe a paralysis, maybe something that's paralyzing your witness? Maybe something you've treasured, even an indwelling sin?

That has no place in your life as a Christian. And you know, when you hear Jesus speak to you with that question, do you want to be healed?

Of course, the inference there is that only Jesus can heal. And that inference again, that you, I am powerless to heal myself.

That paralysed man, without Jesus, he would not have been healed. There was nobody there to help him. He wanted to be made well. He wanted to literally get off of where he was lying and move away from that tool.

He knew he had no power in himself to heal him. So to whom else could he go? Jesus, even with that question, showing him his powerlessness.

[21 : 50] And at the same time showing that Jesus alone has that power to change that man's life. And you know, that man in his answer revealed his helplessness, his powerlessness.

And bring that to ourselves, to ourselves. We're helpless before God. I'm helpless. You're helpless to deal with the root cause of all our spiritual sickness.

We're helpless to deal with the power of sin in our lives. I mean, if we were able, if we were able to deal with that sin in our hearts, well, Jesus need not come.

You need not have come to live that perfect life of obedience and die that death on the cross. It's because we're powerless to deal with the power of sin in our lives.

It's because that we're powerless that Jesus came to free us from the slavery of sin. Because Jesus was made sin for us in the punishment that he took on the cross when he was made sin, when he faced the wrath of God for the sin that he bore in himself.

[23 : 03] Now, of course, that doesn't mean to say that when you're converted, that you somehow let go and let go, not at all. We're not absolving responsibility to deal with sin in our hearts.

What did Jesus say when he told his hearers to, if they're sinning from what we see, pluck out your eyes, or figure it with speaking, of course, to cut off your hands if these are causing you to sin.

Of course, you have a responsibility, I have a responsibility to resist the evil one when he attempts me to sin. We know that with God we can do all things through the one who enables us, who strengthens you to resist the devil.

Because when, as God's word tells us, resist the devil and he will flee from you, we can't hand through the enabling of God's strength.

You can be an overcomer, you can be a conqueror. That's what the apostle John said in 1 John 4, he who is in you is greater than he who's in the world.

[24 : 17] He enables you to have that power to overcome, to be an overcomer, to know that freedom in Christ, to walk with him, to live for him, to witness for him.

What about the man, this man here? What was his response to the power of the Lord Jesus to heal him?

Well, three things, three things. Three things that showed that certainly that man was physically healed. Three things that that man did and this will see that indicates that he was healed in his whole being, that he was saved.

Look what Jesus says to the man in verse 8, get up, take up your bed and walk. Three commands, get up, take up your bed and walk.

The man wants to say, well, man's now healed. And that's what he does, he gets up, he takes up his mat and he walks. Just look at them individually, this is crucial.

[25 : 27] Get up or other person say a rise. Of course, this is more than just a physical rising. This man's been 38 years at Lai, he's not been able to walk.

He's going to rise, yes, from his physical sickness, but he's also going to rise from his spiritual sickness. And you know, you who have known the power of the Lord Jesus in transforming your life, you know that rising, you know that rising from despair, you know that rising from that trap of, we might say that trap of sinful existence, that rising from being imprisoned by the sin that so easily has beset you.

And you know this, that call that Jesus gives here to this man arise to get up. We might even say there's an echo here. There's an echo of that call that you will hear in that last day.

As we're told in God's words, some to rise to everlasting life and some to rise to everlasting destruction. Even now, you're hearing the voice again of Jesus calling you to get up, to arise, rise from your sin, rise from all that's held you down in the sickness of sin.

Don't close your ears to that call to rise. And I say this with the authority of Scripture, all who are actually shutting their ears to that call of Jesus to rise, to rise from sin by his power, to rise from sin, will not be deaf on the day that the voice of Jesus is heard.

[27 : 17] It was later in this chapter in verse 28, Jesus tells us that an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Get up, rise up. Then there's the second command here to take up your bed. And again, it's more than just a physical act of this man lifting up well, this mat, the mat that he slept on, the mat that he lived on, we might see even his house.

It was his home, it was his livelihood. It's all that he had. But now by the power of the word of Jesus, that man's moving on. He's leaving behind that place where he once lay in that place of desperation, that place that had confined him for 38 years in his powerlessness.

He's going to start a new life. We might say in taking up his mat where he slept on, where he lived on, he's going to leave the past behind.

And he's going to take that bed with him, that mat with him, and he's going to take it from a place of oppression to a place of freedom. And you know, when Jesus heals you in your life, there are many

places we've got to leave behind.

[28 : 41] There are many things that you've got to leave behind, you've got to move on and not to go back to. Maybe those things that once kept you from that close walk with the Saviour, leave them behind.

And isn't that part of the healing process in your sanctification as a Christian? Leaving behind, moving on, moving on and further and further away from all those things that grip you in its power, the power of sin.

But now moving forward, you're moving forward in faith. You're leaving behind that which so held you. Now you're moving beyond what once you considered was so precious, but no longer it is because you know the one that's far more precious, the Lord Jesus.

Arise, take up your bed and walk. Again that, yes, a physical walking away from that man's past. But again, a walking that goes beyond a physical walking. That man will walk in faith. He will walk with the Lord Jesus.

[29 : 57] He will have the Lord Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. That walking that tells of living a life that seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus.

And that command that Jesus gave that individual as a command for you to walk with him, to walk on that road, on that heavenly road.

And in that walk to show that you are in the Lord Jesus, that you are following him, that your life has been changed by the walk that you now have in the Lord Jesus.

That man walked away from Bethesda. He walked away from his former existence. But you might be asked, well, where did he walk to? Well, as we saw in the passage, certainly from verse, middle of verse 9, verse 10, where does he walk to?

He walks straight into conflict with these religious leaders. I mean, the word of Jesus changed that man. And the word of Jesus changes you.

[31 : 07] And so often that word that Jesus gives and changes your life, you'll be walking and walking straight into conflict. Be walking into conflict with those who won't accept Jesus as Saviour.

Well, these religious leaders of the day, they certainly refuse to follow Jesus. They wouldn't listen to Jesus' words. And these individuals, these religious leaders who lived by their own interpretation of the law, the way that they distorted the law.

I mean, as we read there, they were even condemning this man for walking on the Sabbath of the Lord's Sabbath, because they said it was breaking the fourth commandment.

Never mind that the man had been healed. Never mind that this man had been given this physical healing by Jesus. All that they could see was a breaking of their interpretation of the fourth commandment.

They're challenging this man. Who told you to break the Sabbath, were told in verse 12. Who told you to take up your matlin walk? Now, it's interesting at this point, that the man doesn't know that it was Jesus.

[32 : 20] Yet no Jesus, as his Lord, the one who gave him his healing. Now, he would come. He would come to know that it was Jesus who had given him not just a physical healing, but a healing of his whole self.

But not yet. I mean, Jesus, even there's allowing this healed man to, we might even say, to go through this time of self-awareness, that yes, he's been healed miraculously.

At this point, he doesn't know who it was that healed him. But this man's been condemned by the religious leaders. Jesus didn't condemn that man.

That man, that healed man's in a journey. Jesus had taken the initiative. That man's life's been turned around. And that man will come to that point where he will know that it was Jesus.

That he will come to give his life to the Savior. He'll know that this Jesus had such compassion in this man. And in contrast to these religious leaders, all they could think of was their own petty rules and condemning those who broke them.

[33 : 31] But you know, when we see the Lord Jesus, even in the way that Jesus here is revealing himself to this man step by step, isn't that often the way that God works in a Christian's life?

Taking you step by step to see that your former life without the Lord Jesus is empty, but that with Christ you have a newness of life.

Maybe if you hear, I'm sure, can testify to the gradual change in your life when the Holy Spirit worked in your heart. And step by step you were drawn to know the Lord Jesus as a Savior, to

know God is your Father.

And you came to that point in your life, a particular point by the grace of God. You knew Jesus as Lord. You gave your life to the Savior.

Well, that man there in Jerusalem, he came to know it was Jesus who healed him. You see that in verse 14, he meets with Jesus. You might say Jesus meets with him there.

[34 : 36] And where does that meeting take place? It takes place in the temple. It's the place where God met with these people. It's the place where sacrifice was offered.

That's where Jesus speaks to this man, tells this man of the greatest need that that man has in his life. The greatest need being his spiritual well-being. And that indicates when Jesus says that he's got to cease from sin.

In other words, Jesus is making that man complete, he's making him whole. Because the consequence of rejecting Jesus was far, far greater.

There's far greater consequences for that man than all the years of his suffering. And you know, I believe it was there in that temple, that this man came to know Jesus as his Lord and his Savior. And for the first time in that man's life, he came to know freedom. That freedom found only in the Lord Jesus. There in the temple, God found that man.

[35 : 42] And notice, this man tells the same people who condemned him. And condemned his Savior. Here, now this man tested him and he's witnessing that it was Jesus who healed him.

And of course that man telling of Jesus, healing him, that pointing to the power of Jesus to cleanse us of our deepest, our deepest ills. And you know, that man, that man telling the Jews that it was Jesus who healed him.

This is God's Word. This Word has remained. And this Word surely testifies to you and to me. That it's Jesus who has made you well.

This man's telling the Jews that this man had healed him, this man had made him whole. And surely it's for you and for me to echo these words. You've had an evening of testimony recently.

I'm sure the words of testimony told of Jesus having made you whole, you who gave your testimony the other evening. And I pray that for all here this evening, that you will be able to testify that he healed me, he made me whole.

[36 : 58] And what a great testimony. What good news to give to others. Don't keep it to yourself. Tell others that he has healed me, that he has made me whole.

Point others to the Savior who loved you and gave himself for you. Amen. Lord our God, our loving Heavenly Father, you who have healed your people of the sickness and disease of sin, of the power of sin.

We thank you Lord that you are the healer, the God who heals. It may it be that if there is anyone or are any in this place of worship this evening who need that healing touch, healing of sin, healing of indwelling sin, you will touch their lives and make them whole.

We thank you Lord for your word. We pray Lord that it will not return to you empty. So Lord, bless us we pray as we sing our final Psalm for this evening. Bless us as we return back to our homes, go before us in all things.

And again Lord we pray your pardon for our many sins. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.