

Jesus: Our Spiritual Healer

Kent Hughes opens his writing about John 5:1-18 with these words: “A quick glance at religious history reveals that it is not difficult to gather people around reports of the miraculous.”

A housewife in California once claimed to have had revelations from St. Joseph. Soon after she first shared her experience, large crowds began to gather around her house. In fact, people made pilgrimages from around the world to see her. Bumper stickers soon appeared touting St. Joseph’s appearance. Just outside of town 400 acres were purchased to build St. Josephs Hill of Hope. Today it is also called the City of God and is a break-off of the Catholic Church. There are people living within the 440 acre compound although the lady who claimed to have had revelations passed away in 2009. For years folks flocked to the sight because of the report of the miraculous.

There are religious shrines all around the world where people go to experience the miraculous and hope to encounter the presence of God. All of this puts into perspective the legend surrounding the Pool of Bethesda writing about by John in his story of Christ.

Here’s the background you need to understand this story from Christ’s life. It was located in Jerusalem. The story is that periodically the waters of the pool rippled. This effect was thought by many to be the result of an unseen angel stirring the waters. They believed that the first person into the water after the stirring would be healed of their disease.

As a result hundreds of people came from the countryside to the Pool of Bethesda to be healed. Five porches were constructed so that the sick could keep out of the sun as they waited for the magic moment. What a sight it must have been. The sick and the dying laying around the edge of this pool hoping for a healing and a deliverance from their problems.

It doesn’t take much of an imagination to see the blind, the lame and the withered laying around the pool. It doesn’t seem unreasonable to imagine the smell and unsanitary conditions that existed in this place.

Jesus was there and as far as we know He was there alone. When traveling alone He didn’t really call attention to Himself. On this day he visits this place. He surveys the pitiful display of broken bodies and finds a man that seems to be one of the hard cases. He had been confined to his pallet bed for 38 years! He had never been able to reach the water in time. This is what John recorded about this encounter.

Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ² Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. ³ Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. ⁵ One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

⁷ *“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”*

⁸ *Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”*

⁹ *Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,* ¹⁰ *so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”*

¹¹ *But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”*

¹² *“Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.*

¹³ *The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.* ¹⁴ *But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.”* ¹⁵ *Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him. John 5:1-15 NLT*

This story is about a man receiving physical healing but there is a much deeper message here that I want you to see.

Jesus asked this man what seems like an obvious question. In fact, one current comedian has made quite a living on a series of funny and obvious questions that people ask and following them up with the phrase “Here’s your sign.” The sign of course said: I’m Stupid!

Now I am not calling Jesus stupid but at first it seems like a crazy question to ask a man waiting for 38 years for a chance at being healed. It’s like asking a person on the side of the road, jacking up a car if they have a flat tire? I mean can you hear this sick man responding back with something like, “Oh no, I just like hanging out here with all these sick people.”

The bottom line is that I believe it’s a question that Jesus Christ asks every one of us. In fact the way you answer this question has a direct impact on Christ work in your life.

I want you to listen very carefully to the simple words of this message today. Many of us in this room have things that are wrong in our lives. We run from our problems, we self-medicate ourselves, we drown out the hurt and the pain with noise, entertainment and buying stuff to make us feel better and forget.

But what if there was help? What if there was a way that you could really be better and overcome the stuff that threatens to ruin your life? Would you take it? Would you accept a plan that can heal your wounded soul?

⁶ *When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?” John 5:6 NLT*

Think about that question in regard to your own life today.

1. Do you want to get well?

Our response: Answer the question!

We hear the promises of God and at first we may even feel drawn to them. There is something comfortable about feeling that you are responding to Christ. Too many people hear the word of God; feel a little something stirring in their hearts and souls but remain unchanged. Why does this happen.

Many times it is because we think we want to be healed spiritually but in reality we don't like the demands that come with the question. When it comes to the salvation and transformation of your soul you need to really know that you have accepted Christ and invited Him into every area of your life.

Pascal the French philosopher put it this way: "Men often mistake the imagination for the heart; and they believe they are converted as soon as they think of being converted." In other words, the thought of being converted or becoming a Christfollower is what many people imagine to be conversion.

Here's the deal. What Christ promises from a distance looks pretty good if you can keep Him at a distance. When you really look at what Christ calls us to you will find that He is an aggressive, requiring Lord. He wants to really enter your life and change you from the inside out.

I am afraid that we often settle for "cheap conversions" which in reality are no conversions. Following Christ means following. It is not a part time gig.

I cannot tell you how many people I have seen come through these doors, sometimes even sitting right down front who are excited about the music and the services. Sometimes they even profess to enjoy the sermons or teachings. They are not really converted, but they are hearing the gospel message of Jesus Christ and after a while they decide they really don't want to be healed. I have seen them cry during the services. I have seen them lift their hands during a song. I have watched them look longingly toward the idea but in the end it just seems too much to let go of for them to follow Christ. So they walk away. They choose an illicit relationship over the purity of the Bible. They choose to keep indulging in some secret sin over dying out and surrendering the hidden things of their lives.

If you are not a believer today I want to ask you the same question Jesus asked. Do you want to get well? Do you want to be forgiven and know that you have been made new? Do you really know that you are a Christian?

Maybe you are a follower of Christ but let me ask you a question. Do you want to escape the baggage that you carry with you? Maybe it is bitterness, unresolved conflicts or things that deeply buried within. Sometime we ignore these kinds of things. We bury them instead of dealing with them. We cauterize them and layer them over but in reality they are still within us and they hamper our growth in Christ and our ability to really serve Him to our full potential.

As a result of not ever allowing Christ to heal you internally you really don't know peace and you have very little strength or power as a Christian. The question remains, "Do you really want to be healed?" Do you really want those things resolved in your life?

I believe with all of my heart that people that will take the time to consistently seek God and intentionally move closer to Him will find Him. You and I can have as much of God as we want! The trouble is we don't always want all that He offers because it demands honesty on our part.

This most seemingly ridiculous question all of the sudden now seems poignant and relevant for not only this man but for all of us.

Let me ask you another question:

Do you want to do what Christ says?

Our response: Act on the directions!

⁷ *"I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me."* ⁸ *Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!"* John 5:7-8 NLT

This man declared that he wanted to be healed but there was no one to help him get to the water. Now Jesus stands before him and gives him clear direction. It is up to him to act on it.

"Stand up, pick up and walk." There is no way he could have done it on his own and there is no way you can heal yourself. You certainly can't forgive yourself for the sins you've committed and you can't overcome the things that keep dragging you back the wrong direction without His help.

It was when this man stood up that he discovered strength in his legs. It was when he obeyed the Lord that he began to be healed. There comes that moment when you must do more than want to be healed you must be willing to do what Christ says.

Are you willing to trust Jesus? Are you willing to abandon the things of this life that you are putting so much faith and trust in in lieu of following Christ?

Cancelling There are two kinds of people: those who say to God 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then have it your way.' Tragically, many people will have to endure eternity without God because they chose to live without him here on earth." Warren adds "When you fully comprehend that there is more to life than just here and now, and you realize that life is just preparation for eternity, you will begin to live differently. You will start living in light of eternity, and that will color how you handle every relationship, task and circumstance"

Do you want to truly follow Christ?

Our response: Abandon your sinfulness!

¹⁴ *But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you."* John 5:14 NLT

It is fascinating to me that Christ circled back to this man to have a final conversation.

Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,¹⁰ so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, "You can't work on the Sabbath! The law doesn't allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"

¹¹ But he replied, "The man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"¹² "Who said such a thing as that?" they demanded.¹³ The man didn't know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.

There was a reason that Christ came back and I hope you have open ears and an open heart to hear it today.

Can you hear what Jesus said to this man? Stop your sinning. Clean up your life.

I have no idea what is going on in your life but I hope you can hear the call of Christ to come and be healed. I am truly afraid that many people have developed a comfortableness with sin and they have embraced their weaknesses more than embracing Christ.

A man entered a bar, bought a glass of beer and then immediately threw it into the bartender's face. Quickly grabbing a napkin, he helped the bartender dry his face while he apologized with great remorse. "I'm so sorry," he said. "I have this compulsion to do this. I fight it, but I don't know what to do about it." "You had better do something about your problem," the bartender replied. "You can be sure I'll remember you and will never serve you another drink until you get help." It was months before the man faced the bartender again. When he asked for a beer, the bartender refused. Then the man explained that he had been seeing a psychiatrist and that his problem was solved. Convinced it was now okay to serve him, the bartender poured him a drink. The man took the glass and splashed the beer into the bartender's astonished face. "I thought you were cured," the shocked bartender screamed. "I am," said the man. "I still do it, but I don't feel guilty about it anymore."

You can attempt to excuse sin in the life of the Christian but in reality you have to climb over some pretty important and startling scriptures.

Galatians 5:19-25 NLT

Ephesians 5: 1-12 NLT

Colossians 3:5-10 NLT

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 NLT

Titus 2:11-14 NLT

³ And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵ But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we

know we are living in him. ⁶ Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.1
John 2:3-6 NLT

Once there was an old hermit who lived on the side of a mountain. There were three little boys who were always trying to outsmart the old hermit. One of the little boys said, "I'll put a marble in my hand and we will go to the old man and ask him what it is I have in my hand. So the three boys went to visit the old man and the little boy said, "Old man, what have I in my hand?" The old hermit answered, "A marble". The three boys left and came back with another similar scenario and to the boy's astonishment the old man in his wisdom was able to answer the question. The next day the boys were pondering the situation trying to come up with something so ingenious that the old man would never guess the answer. Then one of the boy's said, "I know, I'll put this baby bird in my hand and I'll ask the old man if the bird is alive or dead and if he says the bird is alive, I will crush it in my hand and outsmart the old man." So with smiles on their faces they went back to the old hermit's house and the little boy said, "Old man, what have I in my hand?"

The old man answered, "A baby bird." Then the boy said, "Is this bird alive or dead?" The old man looked at the little boy and said, "It is as you wish my son, it is as you wish". The fate of that little bird rested in the hands of that little boy just as the destiny of our souls rest in our own hands. God does not determine where we will spend eternity; that choice is made by us. To accept Christ as Savior or to reject Him is totally up to us.

Today He comes by us in all of our need and He says the same thing to us that He said to this poor man.

Do you want to get well?

Are you willing to take His directions?

Are you willing to abandon your sin?