

The Cripple in Bethesda 2-17-B

During the life of Jesus on earth, we read of His attendance at the traditional feasts or celebrations that all Jewish men were expected to participate in each year—the feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. On one of these occasions, Jesus went to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was a city surrounded by high walls, and each section of the wall or gated entrance had a special title that was used to give directions. One day Jesus walked into the part of the city near the Sheep Gate where there was a beautiful pool area. The Aramaic name for the pool was Bethesda. Two large pools were surrounded by five covered colonnades, two on each side of the pools and one between them. This location was well known throughout the city as a site for large numbers of disabled people—the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed—to gather.

On this day when Jesus walked near the pool of Bethesda, He met a man that had been paralyzed for 38 years. Usually an invalid's family would see he or she was carried to a place to beg each morning and then carried home each evening only to repeat the task the following day. This man had chosen instead to wait daily beside the pool in hopes of a miracle. People at the pool believed an angel would appear at unexpected times and the first to get into the water at those times would receive a miraculous healing.

Jesus asked the invalid an interesting question, "Do you want to get well?" The man assumed Jesus was referring to the tradition, and he told Jesus his sad story. He explained that no one would help him when the angel stirred the water and he was unable to get himself into the pool. Many times Jesus brought healing in answer to people's faith. However, even though this man had no faith in Jesus, this did not limit Jesus' ability to work a miracle.

Jesus simply told the man, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Immediately the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked even though it was the Sabbath. The religious leaders had made very strict laws about the Sabbath, the day that was to be kept holy to honor God. They had taken the Law given to Moses and added many rules of their own. No one was allowed to pick up a mat and carry it on that day, so this man was "violating" their religious law. Jews quickly stopped the man and told him he was breaking the law for carrying his mat. But the man explained that the One who healed him told him to do it. Then the Jewish men asked who the man was that had told him to carry his mat.

Jesus had slipped away into the crowd and the healed man had no idea who Jesus was. Later that day Jesus went to the temple to talk to the man He had healed by the pool. The man had received a miraculous healing of his body, but there was something more important that needed to be made whole, his heart. Jesus said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." Jesus had performed a healing to help this man see his need to accept Jesus. But there were always those who were happy to receive a miracle but unwilling to turn from their sinful lives to follow Jesus.

Jesus brought healing to a man's physical body, and it was a wonderful sign of His healing power. But the sinful nature of the man's heart held a far more eternal consequence that concerned Jesus.

Teacher's Notes

- I. **Journey to a feast.**
 - A. Location of the pool.
 - B. Description of the pool.
- II. **Miracles at the pool.**
 - A. People in need.
 - B. Awaiting the opportunity.
- III. **Jesus entered the scene.**
 - A. He heard the story.
 - B. He asked the question.
- IV. **The results.**
 - A. A miraculous healing.
 - B. A changed life.

Activity

Have students draw a small circle in the center of a sheet of paper. Draw another circle a bit larger around the first, and several more around that, like a target. Label each circle. The outer circle represents a simple need they may have that day. The next circle would be a little more important. The next would be a need they feel is even more important. Continue to the center circle, the most important, their personal commitment to Jesus.

Teacher Growth

Students in your class may have a wide variety of needs. Some may have physical needs and their interest in this lesson would be for healing. Others may have financial needs or be in need of direction or help in other practical ways. It would be easy for you to focus your attention on the obvious things you can observe, but remember God sees their heart's need. Pray that the eternal need of every student is met as well.

Scripture Passages:

John 5:1-15

Memory Verse:

Psalm 107:20 – *"He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave."*





