

What Did Jesus Mean?

Digging deep into Jesus' teachings.

THE CHRISTIAN
WorkingWoman



What Did Jesus Mean? Healing at Pool of Bethesda

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Led by Mary Lowman

John 5:1 – 14 ESV

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁵One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” ⁷The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” ⁸Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” ⁹And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” ¹¹But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” ¹²They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” ¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. ¹⁴Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

The Setting

Jesus is going up to Jerusalem. As he enters Jerusalem, he purposefully goes through the Sheep Gate, and beside it is a pool called Bethesda.



How it looks today.

The ruins of the Pool of Bethesda are still in Jerusalem, located in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, near the Church of St. Anne. While the healing waters are no longer active, the excavated twin basins and remnants of the five porticoes can be seen today as a significant historical and religious tourist site.



How it looked in Jesus' day.

The people who were by the pool – a “multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed” (vs 4) – were looking for some way to be healed and they chose to believe the stories that had developed around this pool.

Let me urge you stay clear of anything connected with the “unseen world”—including reading your horoscope on the internet, etc. This is the devil's territory, and if you stick your toe in his cesspool, you open a door for him to get a foothold in your life—even if you're a true Christian.

The Man at the Pool

We don't know how long this man has been coming to the pool; whether it was the entire 38 years or not, we read that he had been there "a long time." Jesus sees him and he knew his predicament. Why did Jesus pick this one man to heal that day? The man didn't know Jesus, but Jesus knew him!

And Jesus knows you completely— knows everything about you, inside and out, and all you have ever felt or thought or done.

Psalm 139:1 – 6

O Lord, you have searched me and known me! ²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.³You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.⁴Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.⁵You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Nobody knows you like Jesus, and nobody cares for you like Jesus.

I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus,
Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true.
I would tell you how He changed my life completely;
He did something no other friend could do.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He.
No one else could take the sin and darkness from me;
O how much He cared for me.

No one has ever or will ever care for you like Jesus!

Jesus asks him a very strange question: "Do you want to be healed?" (vs 6).

Not everyone wants to be healed because healing brings responsibilities. This man was paralyzed physically and spiritually.

Jesus can set you free from whatever paralysis you've been hanging on to. If you feel stuck—like you've been sitting beside a pool waiting to be healed—that's not where Jesus wants you to be. Jesus has good plans for you and he cares. This is the sick man's answer to Jesus' question:

The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me" (John 5:7).

Shifting the blame! *It's not his fault!*

The Bible says if you seek for God with all your heart, you will find him.

Deuteronomy 4:29: *But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Jesus could have confronted this invalid man but he just tells him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk" (vs 8). So, it looks like this healing is not a response to anything religious or faithful about the man. Jesus is moved by the misery he sees others having to endure. He is compassionate and sympathetic to our needs.

Hebrews 4:15: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Now what happens?

Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk'" (John 5: 9-11).

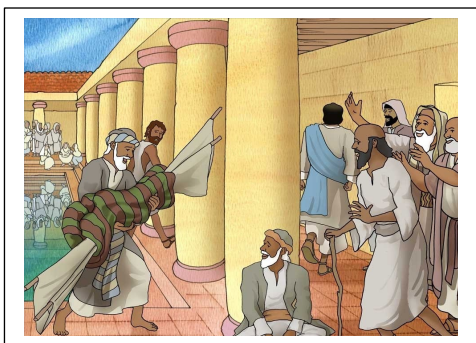
Does Jesus know that this is the Sabbath? Do you think Jesus knows this will create conflict?

Do you remember the time when Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field on the Sabbath and they were hungry so they picked heads of grain to eat. The Pharisees confronted Jesus about doing this on the Sabbath. Jesus reminds them of times in the Old Testament when Sabbath rules were broken, and then he said, *“For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath”* (Matthew 12:8).

Jesus never does anything mindlessly—like we do. He is trying once again to teach his Jewish kinsmen who he is. He’s Lord of the Sabbath!

Some Jews confront the man who was healed for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. And what is his reply? *“The man who healed me told me to take up my bed so I did!”* (vs 11). They asked him who this man was. He said he did not know who it was because Jesus had withdrawn.

The man stands up, stretches out his legs, realizes he truly can walk on those puny legs that haven’t worked for 38 years, and then picks up his bed as he was told to do.



Was this what it looked like? Were there people all around cheering him, congratulating him, excited for him that he could walk? Did he even have a smile on his face? You would think so, but we aren’t told.

Now what happens?

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, *“See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you”* (vs 14).

The sick man didn’t find Jesus; Jesus found him. And if you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, it’s because Jesus found you, you didn’t find him.

Luke 19:10: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

Remember the time that Jesus healed a man blind from birth:

John 9:1 – 3: *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”*

Why did Jesus choose this ungrateful, sinful man to heal? In his sermon on this passage, John Piper puts it this way:

“Sin no more. Stop sinning. My aim in healing your body is the healing of your soul. I have given you a gift. It’s free. It came first, before my command. You didn’t earn it. You weren’t good enough for it. I chose you freely. And I healed you. Now, live in this power. Let the gift of healing, the gift of my free grace, be a means to your holiness.” ¹

What could be worse than 38 years as an invalid? Eternal separation from God.

¹ John Piper, “Healing for the Sake of Holiness,” August 23, 2009. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/healed-for-the-sake-of-holiness>

“The point is this: In the first coming of the Son of God into the world, we receive foretastes of his healing power. The full healing of all his people and all their diseases and disabilities awaits the second coming of Christ. And the aim of these foretastes, which we receive now, is to call us to faith and holiness.” (John Piper)²

Romans 8:22 - 23:

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Paul said we are groaning inwardly as we wait for the redemption of our bodies. Our souls are redeemed; our sin is forgiven; our eternal destiny is secure. But we are left in this sin-bound body and sometimes we groan.

1 John 3:2: *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

1 Corinthians 2:9: *But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him...”*

Far more important than physical healing is that we meet Jesus in our brokenness—and we are all broken—and receive his forgiveness, and then live all the rest of our days growing in our faith, getting to know Jesus better and better, and doing what we must do to become more like Jesus.

Breakout room questions:

1. Have you been praying about some brokenness in your life, physically or otherwise, asking Jesus to heal you? How long have you prayed for healing?
2. Have you ever asked Jesus to use that brokenness, that pain, that missing thing in your life to make you more holy, more like Jesus?
3. If Jesus has healed you of something that you prayed for, have you thanked him as you should, and given him the glory for that healing?

² John Piper, “Healing for the Sake of Holiness,” August 23, 2009. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/healed-for-the-sake-of-holiness>