

#17 – John 5:1-17

Need: To understand the lesson found in the healing process.

Aim: To fully understand and apply the lesson of Jn. 5:1-17.

Title: “Faith with Consequences”

Prop: In Jn. 5:1-17 we find a **I. Man in Need – Jn. 5:1-9** of healing and when the healing was accomplished, the **II. Man’s Faith Challenged – Jn. 10-17** by religious leaders and then was bolstered by a reappearance of Jesus. This shows that faith in Christ possesses challenges of its own for all who believe.

Intro: As I thought about this passage, my mind turned to disability issues.

In the time of Jesus there were neither surgical procedures nor hospitalization service, no rehab centers, no elevators, nor wheel chairs or walkers. There were no laws to facilitate disabled people in any way or manner; buildings with stairs were not handicap friendly. Since this was an agrarian culture, the work required a healthy body, one that was mobile to plow, plant and harvest the fields, to work the livestock. A man who could not walk was a burden to his family and friends. The man in this passage today was in real need. He was relying upon an ancient false myth of healing that if he could get to the water before anyone else did, he would be made well. His hope and faith was based upon something which could not produce what he needed most, physical healing. Jesus seized the opportunity and healed his body, faith and heart.

The immediate need was evident while the man's real issue needed to be revealed. God used personal circumstances in the life of this man to call him to Himself. God will and does use circumstances in life to bring us to Himself.

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We must all evaluate the foundation of our faith in Christ. Have we been waylaid by false teaching or faulty understanding or logic of what constitutes life rendering, saving faith?

Transition: In this portion of chapter 5, Jesus was found in Jerusalem at the time of a Jewish feast.

I. Man In Need – Jn. 5:1-9

A. Introductory Matters (1-5)

1. Travelogue (1) – In verse 1, we find Jesus in Jerusalem during the Jewish feast season, most likely the Feast of Pentecost, some 50 days after Passover (Easter/Resurrection Sunday).

As a good Jew, Jesus went to Jerusalem to join in the festivities at the temple as it was the central place for Jewish worship and celebration. The city would swell to 10 times its normal population; as the countryside was dotted with tents as the housing within the city walls was limited. Nevertheless the city was packed.

2. Pool of Bethesda (2-5) – In verse 2, John mentioned a pool by the sheep gate with five specific porches. The sheep gate was originally designed as the entrance for the sacrificial animals on their way to the temple for a sin offering and other special purposes. The pool, an intended water trough for animals, had been expanded over time for human use. It had five porches which surrounded the pool. Although ritual bathing was part of the culture, this pool also had another important claim to fame. The five porches were lined with those who were sick, lame and withered, all waiting for a **“troubling”** of the waters. It could be a bubbling spring which provided the water supply for the pool or some other geological phenomenon which led to the myth about healing as mentioned in verse 4. When the bubbling occurred, which supposedly was caused by an angel, the first one in the water was to be healed of their illness.

Such was the belief; but there was no evidence that the pool had curative powers or not. Nevertheless, rumor had become fact in the mind of those who had no other hope. This was of course a last resort for most of the crowd. Verse 5 tells us that there was a man who had been sick for some 38 years.

We have no idea as to the cause of his illness or how long he had been present at the pool. But his situation was desperate and mostly likely all other courses of actions had been exhausted. There was no other place to go! It was his last ditch effort.

B. No Expectations (6-9)

1. Rhetorical Question (6) – In verse 6, Jesus singled out one man in the midst of the crowd of sick people. Whether it was through observation or divine knowledge, Jesus knew the man had been sick for a long time and had been lying on a pallet for quite some time as well. I can't even begin to imagine the stink of human and animal excrement, the pallor of disease which clouded the air, kind of like the emergency room! Jesus waded through the sea of disease and stench and centered upon one man in particular. Jesus called for this individual to turn his attention to Him and asked a question which must have seemed odd to the man. Whether for lack

of human contact or interest the man answered the question: **“Do you wish to get well?”**

2. Desire (7) – In verse 7, the man’s focus and hope was upon a myth of this pool stirred by an angel, yet realistically he had no hope of reaching even if there was a possibility of healing. It didn’t matter; he had no means of getting to the healing water at the right instant. Before he could crawl his way to the water someone else would beat him to it. His faith was centered on something that may or may not work. He had expectations that through human effort, if he could just be quicker he would be healed.

Many people live in the same manner, placing their hope, faith and expectations in things which cannot deliver. Try though they may, life is full of disappointment, unfulfilled desires and hopes. Faith is misplaced in human effort and since we are all fatally flawed with sin we can never reach God whose has all the answers to life and provides the power to change and gives us a personal relationship with God. Jesus alone is the bridge to God. He dealt with the curse and penalty of sin at the cross and the only way to reach God is through Jesus. Our efforts can never be enough. It is Jesus, and faith in what He has done at the cross, with no added human effort, that brings eternal life. Paul said it is either all faith or all works. It can’t be both. We know through the Law of God that works are not the answer.

Only Jesus alone can cleanse us from our sin, which keeps us from God.

This man wanted help. Jesus was there not to help the man get into the water but to solve the problem apart from any human effort.

3. Divine Intervention (8) – In verse 8 Jesus directed the man’s attention to Himself and commanded: **“Get up, pick up your pallet and walk!”** There was a lot that happened at that moment of time; the disease was gone, strength and new muscle was formed and coordination was immediately present and it all happened at once! Without any human effort Jesus healed him.

Without any human help Jesus heals us spiritually.

I remember when my kids began to walk, each in their own unique manner. Caleb never really crawled as such but used his arms to swim, we called in the **“army crawl.”** When he was good and ready, he began to cruise, using furniture for balance. Joel almost hit the ground running, but he too cruised, using furniture not only for balance, but climb on as well. Kara had two older brothers to provide her with balance and will to walk as well.

The point being, it takes time for a young child to go through the progression from crawling to walking. Even when surgery is performed, it takes time to learn to walk again. In the aftermath of my surgical procedures I was ushered to a chair to sit up for a while; when laying on one’s back for

a long period, a person loses the ability to stand. It takes time to overcome light headedness and gain equilibrium before walking can be attempted.

All of this was done with two nurses one on each arm lest I collapse.

It all happened in a moment of time for this man. But something special was required, belief and action. He could have just laid there I guess, but something moved within his heart and he believed. Belief must be the motor of our faith, and exhibited through our actions and choices. To believe without action is useless.

4. Faith Produces Action (9) – The man got up, picked up his wooden pallet and walked out of all the human tragedy of sickness into the expectations of life yet to come.

Transition: As he was walking home, he ran into the religious police in verse 10. They didn't care if he had been miraculously healed they were concerned about their misinterpretation of the Law.

One of the Ten Commandments was: **“Don't work on the Sabbath.”** In our time frame, our Saturday was the Sabbath. Everything had to be prepared for a day of rest. Regular work was forbidden and violation of such was punishable by death. Other activities were allowed but no work. Over the centuries this Law morphed into other restrictions which were not part of the deal. An actual number of miles one could travel was instituted,

along with other restrictions. If there was medical emergency, the religious leaders were called in to assess the condition or injury and decide whether it could wait until the Sabbath day was over for treatment. Such were the restrictions which caused Jesus to utter: **“The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath.”** My Sabbath is Monday, where if at all possible I am out of the office. Jesus went even further: **“Which one of you whose donkey falls into a hole on the Sabbath will wait until the next day get it out lest it die?”** These **“laws enforced”** were also who this man ran into and they were attempting to quash his joy by charging him for **“working on the Sabbath.”**

II. Man’s Faith Challenged – Jn. 5:10-17

A. Religious Police (10-13)

1. Unexpected Encounter (10) – In verse 10 the man was accosted by a group of Jews: **“It is the Sabbath and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”**

2. Shifting of Blame (11) – In verse 11, the one who had been healed laid the blame on Jesus for his **“offense.”** As I thought about this, the man was convinced that Jesus had the authority to heal, so it was only logical that He had the authority to command him to get up and carry his pallet.

What we need to understand is what, in accordance to the original command, this man's action was justifiable. He was breaking man's law, not God's.

3. Police Action Required (12-13) – This group wanted to know who had given him permission to violate the Sabbath, as they understood the rules.

Religious police are everywhere these days. I ran into them in both churches I have pastored: **“We have never done it that way before!”** It took 6 years to institute changes in the first church. Many of those changes are still in effect today. When I came here my leadership model was challenged, or in the **“police’s”** mind, lack thereof. I am a delegator, not one who has to have my hands in everything. My goal is to empower others to serve, to take ownership of their field of ministry. It came to the forefront when the stool in nursery bathroom began to leak. For some reason the matter was brought to me, so I just gave it over to the trustees to handle, which they did. During the process the **“police”** came to me and accosted me between services about the progress or lack thereof on repairs. I didn't know nor was it my concern. It was the trustees' job and I was confident that they would handle it and in due time after the floor dried out, they did. But I was the pastor and in the mind of the **“police”** it was my job to participate and supervise my trustees! I have done such repairs in the past

but often with disastrous results. I didn't feel the need and I stood my ground. It became a wedge between me and the **“police.”**

My point is this: The man was doing exactly what he was commanded to do and he must have been strutting, jumping, running, and full of joy that Jesus had healed him. But leave it to some people who can't stand to see someone so full of joy that they have to kill it. There are also those who have some warped belief about proper behavior and try to impose it upon others.

Early on in this ministry I was challenged that my polo shirt and khakis in the summer were not acceptable attire for a pastor. I took it under advisement and did it anyway. I was indeed a little perturbed and added the comment: **“Get central air and I will dress accordingly.”** That probably wasn't a Christian response and the wedge grew wider.

In verse 13 the man didn't know who had healed him, for Jesus slipped away in the clamor over the healing and melted away into the crowd.

B. Aftermath (14-17)

1. Sought Out (14) – After the encounter and the furor of the healing, Jesus sought out the man and found him at the temple. Imagine that. The man went to the temple to worship and give God thanks for the healing. He was well aware; it wasn't his false hope in the water that brought about his

healing. It was this Man who by His simple command was able to make him walk.

2. Godly Advice (14b) – Jesus’ advice was timely and if one reads between the lines, there is a lesson about choices: **“Behold, you have become well; therefore, don’t continue in your sinful behavior,** (which may have caused the injury or sickness to begin with), with the thought so do **“That nothing else happens to you.”** In other words, change your ways; you have been given a second chance! Let the miracle be the first step in developing saving faith.

3. Religious Police Part II (15-16) – After his second encounter with Jesus, the one who had been healed told the Jewish religious police, that it was Jesus who had made him well.

4. Persecution Ensues (16-17) – In verse 16 the healing of the lame man became the beginning of organized opposition to Jesus and His ministry of healing. Personally I think it was an issue of jealousy! The basic charge was doing **“good things”** on the Sabbath.

5. Responsibility (17) – Jesus’s reply was simple and direct: **“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”** Jesus was direct and to the point that He was doing His Father’s work. His focal point at this time was to preach the words of Good News and to prove Himself as Messiah,

God in human form. He then verified His words and works with miracles such as the world has never seen! Jesus had the power to heal physically, but even more important was the power to heal spiritually to grant new life full of purpose and hope.

You might be facing challenges that are overwhelming, pressures from outside forces, adverse circumstances, perhaps because of bad choices. I know that Jesus has the power to bring hope and purpose, the ability help us to face those challenges, and the grace to carry us through unto eternal life.

So, are you wallowing in the heavy seas of life? Jesus is the only one who can calm the raging seas and bring peace, hope and purpose to your life. And for us as believers, let's not be part of the “**religious police,**” judging others for insignificant things which have no bearing on the real Christian experience. Be a source of joy and encouragement to those who are struggling in this life.

“Faith With Consequences” – Jn. 5:1-17

- The man in this passage today was in real need, but was relying upon an ancient myth of healing.
 - His hope and faith was based upon something
 - Jesus seized the opportunity and healed his body, faith and heart.
 - The immediate need was revealed.
- God used personal circumstance in the in the life of this man.

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