

The Third Sign: The Healing of the Lame Man on the Sabbath

John 5:1-18

August 28, 2022

1. A man lame for 38 years (1-5)
 - a. "After this"
 - i. Jesus' healing of the nobleman's son (4:43-54)
 - ii. Jesus' ministry in Samaria (4:1-42)
 - b. "There was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem"
 - i. This is the only unnamed festival in John, indicating that the purpose of this visit wasn't tied to the festival, but to the work that Jesus would do there.
 - ii. The feast was in Jerusalem, so Jesus journeyed up to the city to celebrate it.
 - c. The Pool of Bethesda (2)
 - i. The present-day location is uncertain, but it was likely twin pools beneath St Anne's Monastery. The pools were about 20 feet deep and as large as a football field.
 - ii. The 5 porches surrounding the pools created a natural place for people to congregate, which made it a great place for beggars.
 - d. A gathering place for those with no medical recourse (3-4)
 - i. Around these pools lay a great multitude of physically broken people.
 1. Blind
 2. Halt – those with an impaired limb or body part
 3. Withered – those with diseased, paralyzed bodies
 - ii. They thought that the waters held supernatural power (4).
 1. They believed that an angel would randomly stir the water, and whoever got into the water first would be healed.
 2. The angel is not said to be from God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:3).
 3. These lame people had exhausted every other means of healing and had turned to superstition.
 - e. A certain man was there, which had an infirmity 38 years (5)
 - i. The man is unnamed.
 - ii. He is lame, and unable to walk.
 - iii. What is highlighted is the length of his infirmity, 38 years; he was beyond hope of any cure.
2. Get up – Even on the Sabbath! (6-10)
 - a. Jesus sees and knows (6).
 - i. While this man feels invisible to others, he is seen and known by His Creator.
 - ii. Jesus understands the extent and duration of his physical need.
 - iii. Jesus sees and knows this man's spiritual need, which is unknown to the lame man.
 - b. Jesus pursues him – "Wilt thou be made whole?" (6b).
 - i. Jesus asks a questions that seems to have an obvious answer, but He is probing for a deeper need.
 - ii. The man is overwhelmed with his physical need, but Jesus wants to make this man aware of a deeper need.
 - c. The man summarizes his plight without understanding the identity of the One to Whom he is speaking (7).
 - i. He rehearses his pitiful situation, and Jesus listens compassionately.
 - ii. He believes he has no one.
 - iii. Yet, he is in the presence of the One created him, the One Who sustains him, and the One Who can make him whole, body and soul.
 - iv. He believes that the water has the magical power to heal, and yet he's in the presence of the Almighty God.
 - d. Jesus responds with a threefold command (8).
 - i. Rise – Jesus' command is abrupt and echoes the prophecy in Isaiah 35:6 that the lame will leap like a deer.
 - ii. Take up your bed – Jesus commands him to carry the very thing that was used to carry him!
 - iii. Walk – Jesus commanded him to do the impossible!
 - e. His healing was immediate (9).
 - i. He was immediately made whole.
 - ii. He demonstrated that healing by taking up his bed and walking.
 - iii. The man experienced the power of God in the person of Jesus, and not through an impersonal, magical force.
 - f. Rather than rejoice, the Jews see the man's obedience as a violation of their law (9b-10).
 - i. The Jews reveal that they are just as misled as the lame who looked for the magical stirring of the water.
 - ii. The Jews know their law, but they do not realize that they are in the presence of the Law Giver and Completer.

3. Sin No Longer (11-15)
 - a. The healed man deflects the Jews' attack by blaming Jesus (11).
 - i. He is still oblivious to the identity of his Healer.
 - ii. The Jews will excuse him for following the command of Jesus, but they won't excuse Jesus for following the will of His Father.
 - b. Rather than be thrilled with the miracle, the Jews are fixated on what they believe to be a violation of their law (12).
 - i. In the mind of the Jews, miracles can be performed any day but the Sabbath.
 - ii. The very day set aside to worship God is the very day they ban His supernatural intervention.
 - iii. The Jews are just as ignorant of Jesus' identity as the formerly lame man (12-13).
 - c. Jesus finds him in the temple and challenges his unbelief (14).
 - i. Jesus seeks this man out, because He came to seek and save those who are lost (cf. Luke 19:10).
 - ii. Jesus commands him to sin no more, unless something worse than paralysis come upon him.
 1. Jesus is rebuking this man's sin of unbelief.
 2. Without belief in who Jesus is, this man will perish eternally (cf. 3:16-18, 36).
 - d. Tragically, the man persists in his unbelief (15).
 - i. Rather than believe in Jesus, the man reports Him to the Jews.
 - ii. This man, who has experienced God's unmerited favor, was too bound by the fear of man to believe in Jesus for the saving of His soul.

4. The work of God, Father and Son (16-18)
 - a. Once they are made aware of Jesus' identity, they begin to systematically persecute Jesus, laying plants to kill Him (16).
 - i. They could not deny His power, but they chose to violently cast it aside for interfering with their religion.
 - ii. In their minds, they could not rest until He was slain.
 - iii. The human mind is still at war with God (cf. Romans 8:7-8).
 - b. Jesus responds to their persecution decisively (17).
 - i. My Father continues to work – just because God rested the 7th day, doesn't mean that God has ceased to sustain and intervene in His creation.
 - ii. And I work – Jesus, as one with the Father, is working hand in hand with His Father in this world.
 - iii. Jesus referred to God as His Father when He cleansed the temple, and the Jews did not understand the implication; this time, the Jews fully understand that Jesus is claiming God to be His Father, and He is one with God.
 - iv. Jesus is not violating the Sabbath, but is acting as an agent of the Father to do the Father's will on that Sabbath day.
 - v. The reason Jesus sought out the lame man, was not just to heal this man physically; the reason He did so was to call attention to the necessity of believing that He is the unique Son of the Father, and the only way to God.
 - c. The Jews fully understand and reject Jesus' claims (18).
 - i. They fully understood that Jesus claimed that God was His Father.
 - ii. They fully understood that Jesus claimed to be equal with God.
 - iii. Rather than heed the miraculous display of Jesus' divinity, they redoubled their efforts to kill Him.
 - iv. Ironically, they the One they sought to defend, in reality the sought to slay.
 - v. And ironically, the very people that were seeking to kill him, were the very ones for whom He came to die.

Conclusion:

1. Are you here this morning with problems that seem to be beyond hope?
2. Are you viewing God and His power as an impersonal force?
3. Do you feel like you have no one to help you, not realizing that Jesus is pursuing you?
4. Have you believed in Him, or do you see Him as a threat to your religion and superstitions?