

**Sermon Series:** Book of John  
**Sermon Title:** A Compassionate Instigation  
**Scripture Reading:** John 5:1-18  
Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church  
September 15, 2019

We come today to the third sign or the third miracle that John records Jesus doing in the book. We saw Jesus turn 800 liters of water into wine and last week we saw Jesus heal an officials son from a distance of 20 miles.

One of the things that we saw last week was that the Jews in Galilee welcomed Jesus but for the wrong reasons. They wanted to see Jesus perform miracles for them and were only interested in what Jesus could do for them.

If last week, John showed us how people had a superficial interest in Jesus- this week we see the beginning of opposition to Jesus.

From here on in the book, John is laying out for us a roadmap that leads to Calvary. And Jesus instigates this opposition with an act of compassion to a disabled man.

I must admit that as I began to study this passage I thought that I knew exactly what the meaning was. After diving into for many hours, I realized that I had not understood it in its context. Just as a pause and a side note let me encourage you; read the Bible in context. Don't read a little division or story under the headings. This can cause you to misunderstand it.

Let me begin today as I sometimes do, by giving you what this text is about upfront before we go through it.

### **Summary:**

**Jesus' compassionate healing of a lame man on the Sabbath is the spark that lights the fuse that leads to his crucifixion.**

Due to the long text I won't read the whole thing again but keep your Bible open so that you can keep up.

This story takes place in Jerusalem, near the temple at the pools called Bethesda. It has been excavated. You can go there today and see the ruins. Let me set the scene for you.

There were various pools in Jerusalem used for washing. These were formed by collecting rain water and some were supplied by springs.

Sometimes they were for ritual purposes and sometimes for practical purposes.

This place Bethesda, which means *'house of mercy'*, was probably 2 pools and had 5 covered columns with steps going down into the water.

Picture this- it was full of sick people. John tells us in **verse 3** that there was a *'multitude of blind, lame and the paralyzed.'* **Why were they there?**

They could have been at the temple. That probably would have been the best place to hang out if you were in need of healing!

But they were at the pool of Bethesda. Why?  
Because of a superstition.

### **1. The Futility of Superstitions.**

It was believed that the waters were stirred by an angel ever so often and that whoever got into the water the fastest would be healed. We see this in chapter 5 verse 4, which is not included in the ESV and many other translations. Why?

Well, the oldest manuscripts don't include that part but the newer ones do. In textual criticism, this means that a scribe probably added it as it was being copied by hand. The older the manuscript, the more reliable.

So, if you have 10 manuscripts of this chapter and a few of the new ones contain this verse 4 and the older ones do not, you know it was added later.

But, that said, it doesn't really matter if you include it or not because **verse 7** says that this one man believed that 'when the water is stirred up' something happened. It was a superstition. Does it sound to you consistent with the character of God to cause an angel to stir a pool and create a game for the handicapped .... with healing going to the fastest of them?

Some ancient witnesses speak of it being a red medicinal pool that likely made some well, depending on their ailments.

We are all aware of how easy us human beings can turn to superstitions of numerous kinds to solve the fears and difficulties we have in life. Just look around Hong Kong. Go to a temple and see.

So, into the scene walks Jesus of Nazareth.

And he singles out a man out of all the others.

The man has been disabled for 38 years. We don't know how long he has actually been at the pool, but **verse 6** says, 'a long time'.

And Jesus asks him a question.

"Do you want to be healed?" **verse 6**

The man's response is interesting.  
He says that he has no one to put him into the pool.  
No one. No family. No friend.  
There's no one to help him get there fast enough.  
And he must be able to move a little or with difficulty  
because he says, "while I am going...another steps  
down before me."  
So, it's no use. 38 years. No one to help him.  
It's very sad.

**8** Jesus said to him, "Get up, (literally 'Rise') take up your bed, and walk." **9** And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now, we see glory! We see the power of Jesus' word. Jesus is able to simply desire for the man to be healed, a man who has been this way for 38 years....and he is able to make it happen.

Again....No abracadabra. No hocus-pocus. No naming it and claiming it. No essential oils.  
No prayer to the Father. And no faith on the part of the man is even mentioned. Simply the compassionate God displaying his power and glory to a man who's trusting in the futility of superstitions.

Well, some trust in superstitions, which is Animism... and others trust in their self-righteousness...which is legalism.

## 2. The Futility of Self Righteousness.

In the later part of **verse 9** the story shifts...with these words, "Now that day was the Sabbath." This is the key to the whole story as we will see. It didn't have to be the Sabbath. Jesus could have done it the day before or the day after, but he didn't. He did it on purpose.

10 So the Jews (meaning the Jewish leaders) said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

Does the law say that? Are they right? No, the law doesn't say that. In the Mishnah, which is a sort of commentary on the law...in Shabbath 7:2 it does say that there are 39 types of work you cannot do on the Sabbath and number 39 says you can't go from one destination to another.

It's not in the Bible.

These laws went way beyond Scripture. They were so legalistic that they cared nothing about a man being healed after 38 years. All they cared about were their rules. One man's hope is in superstitions. These Jewish leaders placed their hope in keeping the Sabbath rules. One man was an Animist. They were Legalists.

But there's more to this story.

The Jewish leaders asked the man in **verse 12**, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

And he doesn't know! Jesus had vanished into the crowd.

Some time later, we don't know when...Jesus found the man in the temple. And they have an interesting conversation.

Jesus said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

It's clear from this passage no matter which way you look at it, that this man's condition (whatever it was) was due to his sin.

(see Ps. 38:1-8, Ps. 32:3-4, Acts 5:1-11, 1 Cor. 11:30, Deut. 28:56-61, Lev. 26:14-16)

This story and the miracle of John 9 at the pool of Siloam are book ends of a big section in John.

Here this man's illness is caused by his sin and in John 9 it clearly is not. Sometimes it is and sometimes it is not. Jesus' point to the man is clear; Stop Sinning!

Interestingly enough, the man doesn't follow Jesus. Nothing about him believing.

Instead, he goes and tells the Jewish leaders that Jesus is the one who healed him.

Don't read that as a heroic act!

Read **verse 16**.

“And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.”

**Jesus’ compassionate healing of a lame man on the Sabbath is the spark that lights the fuse that leads to his crucifixion.**

The compassionate healing of the man was done on the Sabbath day led the Jewish leaders to persecute him. So, what does Jesus do? He intensifies it.

### **3. The Father & the Son working.**

**verse 17-18** ‘But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.’

The people have a superficial interest in Jesus.

The leaders’ response to him turns from interest to persecution to wanting to kill him.

What are the Father and Son doing? Their working even though it’s the Sabbath day. God has the right to work on the Sabbath day.

**What are they working on?**

He will be betrayed by his friend. Arrested. Tried in an unjust court. Beaten to a pulp. Mocked. Spit on. Have his beard pulled out.

He will receive nails in his hands and feet and a spear in his side.

The Son will give his life for sinners on a Roman cross. He will willingly be punished by the Father's design as a payment for the sins of those who will believe in him.

**That's what they're working on!**

These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that by believing you might have life in his name....

Not through your own efforts, whether that is through superstitions....or religious legalism.

There's only one hope for sinners who sin.

Superstitions won't help. No amount of burning of incense sticks can take away sin. Trying to earn God's favor through your own self-righteous rule keeping won't help either.

No amount of law keeping can take away sin.

### **Application:**

You know that Jesus healed many many multitudes.

It should give us pause to know that very few of those healed actually followed Jesus...they personally experienced him do great things....life changing things...and yet we know immediately after the Resurrection..there are just a handful of people still following him.

Some trusted in their superstitions.  
Others loved to be able to brag about their self-righteousness.  
They loved their sin.  
You know, when it all boils down to it....  
We just love sin! We love it!

And Jesus comes to us and says to us, "Sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you."

### **Do you want to be healed.. Set free from sin today?**

Your superstitions won't help. They're useless. Don't attend another temple. It won't do you any good.  
Your self-righteous rule keeping won't impress God either. You need to be set free by Jesus Christ.

#### **John 8:34**

**Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**