

Sunday, September 20, 2020

**Clifford Baptist Church
Amherst, Virginia**

**Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald
Senior Pastor**

(Transcription from the Morning Service that was Streamed Live)



clipart.christiansunite.com

Sermon #18 from the Book of John

“Walking, But Not Healed”

John 5:1-15 (King James Version)

Welcome to all who are here today—in person or via media. We appreciate everyone’s faithfulness in joining us for worship these past few months.

We’re beginning a new chapter today. John wrote this gospel as a witnessing tool to the world under the direction of the Holy Spirit but “percolated” fifty years spending time with Christ, walking in His footsteps, hearing His words, and seeing His miracles. We’re looking at the life of Jesus, and primarily in the gospels we learn about the last three years of His life—His public ministry. The first thirty years we have brief glimpses into—His birth (in the Book of Luke) and when He was in the temple at twelve years old. The last three years of His ministry we learn of His reaching out and introducing Himself to the world as Savior, Messiah, and Son of God. At the point of His ministry beginning, we know He comes to John the Baptist and surrenders to the will and call of God the Father. I believe it was at His baptism that Jesus fully undertook His public ministry which would culminate at the old rugged cross. I believe He said “Yes, Father God, I will even go to the cross to save all humankind.” He begins to choose His disciples, and then we see a “quiet” miracle where He turns water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Very few guests at the wedding knew of this, but the servants knew and Jesus’ mother knew. We learn of His conversation with Nicodemus, His meeting with the woman at the well, and we just finished last week of His healing a nobleman’s son twenty miles from Cana in Capernaum.

As Chapter 5 opens, Jesus’ ministry is well under way. Multitudes of people are seeing Him, following Him, and understanding His ministry is gaining traction. Today’s passage is a very unusual Word of God. You may have read it several times, but I pray I can pick out some of the finer points to study together.

¹After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. ³In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. ⁵And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, **Wilt thou be made whole?** ⁷The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. ⁸Jesus saith unto him, **Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.** ⁹And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. ¹¹He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. ¹²Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk? ¹³And he that was

healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. ¹⁴Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple and said unto him, **Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.** ¹⁵The man departed and told the Jews that is was Jesus, which had made him whole.”

Notice at the close of Chapter 4, Jesus is still in Cana of Galilee. At the beginning of Chapter 5, He is in Jerusalem—this means He walked another eighty miles from the north back down to the south. He was making a trip from the south Judea up to the north—straight through Samaria to meet the woman at Sychar. Here’s where Scripture gets so interesting—it’s been very controversial for centuries. In Jerusalem, Bethesda was a popular meeting place. There were five porches surrounding a pool of water; the people who went there were blind, lame, crippled, and paralyzed. The Greek word John uses to describe these people is “astheneia” which means people without power and strength. So these were weak and sickened individuals unable to move easily. Why did they come to this pool of water every day? We read in verses 4 and 5, the pool had healing qualities. Scripture says an angel would come down from time to time and stir the waters. The first sick person who could get off on the porches and get in the water would be healed. After reading this passage repeatedly this week about the water stirred and someone “racing” to be first in, I think “really?” This doesn’t sound like an act of God; it’s such an awkward situation. I researched various commentaries on these verses from the ancient commentator, Jerome, to our modern ones. Many scholars agree about the angel coming down and one person getting healed are not in the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel of John. These verses seem to be added later than the original words John wrote. Jerome said they did not fit with the language of John; they may have been added later at a different time and by a different person. Many Bible translations leave verses 4-5 completely out; they’re not in the NIV, the New Revised Standard, or the Contemporary English Version. Some versions have them but they’re in parentheses. David Jeremiah does not even comment on them in his commentary. John McArthur and the Interpreter Bible say they believe these verses were added later to the original text. My thoughts are this: The pool was surrounded every single day by people who had very little to no hope and who were most likely extremely poor. This was their last grasp of hope—maybe I can get in the water after its stirred, beat the rest of the crowd, and have some healing. Jerome said the pool was over a spring or a natural geyser and every so often it would flow upward and the waters would stir and boil about. But the tradition developed in an ancient day that an angel came and stirred the water.

Jump ahead two thousand years and think when a “faith healer” comes to a stadium—someone like Benny Hinn. Thousands come to attend—many who are sick and have a health problem. They pray this “healer” will select one or more out of the crowd to be healed; they hold on to a shred of hope that maybe they’ll be the one chosen. It’s the same principle—they hope their life will improve. Whatever you read or believe about these two verses, I’ll share what you need to know: The true, authentic, real healer—the Great Physician—came to the pool that day! And His name is Jesus! Jesus is the one who gives us hope; He is the Savior who gives us life. We need to agree on that. As Jesus came to the pool, He’s really there to meet one man. Remember in Sychar, He had a meeting with one woman at the well. I believe Jesus had an appointment with this man at Bethesda; he had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years. Obviously, the pool had not helped him since he’d been there for so long. He hoped one day, somehow, he could get in the water and be healed. So Jesus comes and asks him a simple question: “Do you desire to be healed, to be able to walk? Do you desire for your life to change so you can move forward?” The man’s reply is interesting: He does not say yes, I want to be healed. He tells Jesus that when the waters move, no one helps me to get in first. Someone always beats me in; I’ve been here thirty-eight years and the angel stirring the

water has never helped. Jesus simply says “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” There’s the miracle—a few simple words—the Great Physician had come to the pool.

The story takes another turn: This is Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath day. Rabbinical law says on Saturday no Jew could lift a burden. So this man is carrying his bed through Jerusalem, through the crowds of people—he’s a “new” man. John doesn’t document if he was happy or what he was feeling; he was just carrying his bed. The Jewish leaders catch up with him and asked what he was doing on this Sabbath day. The healed man said a man met me at the pool, told me to rise, get up, and walk. I’m just doing what he said! They asked who told you that? Who gave you the ability to rise on your crippled legs, get up, and carry your bed? The healed man said I don’t know who he was. If someone healed you after a thirty-eight year disease, wouldn’t you want to know who it was?! What’s amazing is he never found out. The Jewish leaders kept wanting to know; the man said I just don’t know—I wouldn’t recognize him. Here we learn, the man is healed but not saved. His body was healed, but his heart was totally unaffected. He got a lease on his outward life, but inwardly he was headed to hell.

Read verses 14-15. Sometime later Jesus goes to the temple grounds and finds this man He healed at the pool of Bethesda. Jesus told him, I’m the one who healed your legs, gave you a new lease on life, and renewed your purpose to live. You keep sinning the way you are now, and something worse will happen to you. Jesus emphasized not to keep sinning over and over; whatever disease the man had may have been brought on by that sin. Ultimately, I believe Jesus is saying that if this man doesn’t change his ways he’s going to go to hell. His sin will come back on him with a vengeance! I see in this passage that Jesus miraculously and physically healed a man, but the man didn’t allow Him to heal his heart or to forgive his sin. At this point, however, he knows enough to point Him out to the religious leaders.

How do these fifteen verses apply to us? Many years ago I knew a man through a church connection; neither he nor his family attended Clifford. He was in a horrible accident and almost died. He spent weeks in the hospital and more time at home recuperating. I visited him in the hospital and at home and prayed with him. I often spoke to him that the Lord was doing the healing and in control of his recovery which took months. Every time I visited him he would say “I’ve never been in church, but when I get better and can walk I’ll be in your front row.” He eventually recovered, he walked, and drove where he wanted but never once did he fulfill his promise of coming to church—not once. It breaks my heart to share this. Years later, I officiated at his funeral but I could not assure his family that he knew Jesus as Savior. From all our conversations that Jesus loved him, I don’t think he ever gave his heart to Jesus that I know of. There are multitudes of people who give daily “lip service” to God—that He blesses people and heals them. Friends, if you and I woke up this morning we’ve already had a miracle! He’s the author of life and gave us another day. There are so many who receive this miracle but never surrender to Him; they never give their heart in thanksgiving. They have all these blessings—family, health etc, but they ignore Him! They procrastinate and say I’m going to church one of these days; I’m going to give Jesus my heart—but one day their life will be gone and they’ve never done it. Am I describing anyone here today? Has Jesus touched you and you know it but you still resist? You’ve been touched by the Master’s hand, yet you don’t worship Him?

The greatest healing can come to you today by simply saying “Lord Jesus, I know You’re in my life and want me as Your son or daughter. I surrender my heart to You. While You’ve healed me so much on the outside, I’m asking

You to heal me on the inside. Forgive my sin through Your shed blood of the old rugged cross, accept me as Your son or daughter, promise me eternal life, and I will give my life to You in salvation.” If you’ve said this today, don’t procrastinate another day longer. Give Him your heart and life; it’s the greatest gift to be healed of sin and given eternal life. If you need Him, come. Don’t wait and think a better day’s coming.

Believers can we come today and say “Lord, thank You for all the miracles of my life—of getting up this morning, of family, of people who love me and surround me, to be able to provide for my family, my children and grandchildren. You’ve blessed me so much! I need to arrive at the foot of Your throne and say “Lord, I sincerely thank You for what You’ve done for me.” I am not at all directing these comments to you. For myself, I would say I don’t say “thank you” enough. Perhaps, collectively, as we end this time of worship we can say together “Thank You, Lord for what You’ve done for me personally—sustained me, healed me, and blessed me. Praise God for a healed life and heart because You saved me. I’m looking forward to eternity with You. Thank You!”

Today, if you’ve never received Him this is the truest healing of all that you give Him your heart and thank Him for saving you and adopting you as His own. As those who are brothers and sisters in Christ however you’re listening to this message, come to the altar or your heart and thank Him again. Tell Him you don’t want to ignore His blessings and grace in your life. If there’s a need of healing in your life—family, physical, emotional, etc.—He’s still the healer. He met that man at the pool of Bethesda, that woman at the well, and He’ll meet you right where you are today. His character has not changed; He has an appointment with you today!

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for giving us Your word. This passage has intrigued me all week long. As much as I’ve read it, it just dawned on me this man didn’t recognize Jesus. He didn’t accept what Jesus gave him in thanksgiving. Lord, I believe if we’re going to be ministers, witnesses, and representatives of Christ in this world we have to start on the base line of thanksgiving for our salvation—thanksgiving for the miracles You give us. Today, Father, I pray my brothers and sisters will join me here and together we’ll say “Lord Jesus, thank You for what You’ve done for me.” If there’s one here today who’s never received Jesus as Lord and Savior but has received many miracles, may they give their heart as a gift of salvation so You can cleanse them and give them eternal life. May we see that miracle today—you’re still the Great Physician. Bless us we pray, Amen.