



Encountering Mercy

Sunday May 2nd 2020

John 5:1-15 (ESV) After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³ In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed.

⁵ One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When 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?" ⁷ 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." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." ⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

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.'" ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Introduction: This narrative describes the scene of a man, who seems to have made a bad decision earlier in his life that resulted in his being an invalid for 38 years. In those years it also appears that he burned his relational connections and finds himself alone, in a hopeless dilemma.

His encounter with Jesus resulted to his being healed but, his response shows little gratitude for the act of mercy shown to him.

We may not relate with the man's physical condition but, we all know what it's like to make bad decisions that have a negative impact on our lives. Many times, bad choices result in a life of guilt, shame and emotional paralysis that fills us with hopelessness.

It is in times like these that we need an encounter with the Lord of mercy. At the same time we must never overlook the generosity of God's mercy shown to us through Christ.

Our life should reflect our gratitude for God's goodness and mercy displayed through the work of Christ.

This is what we will learn from this gospel account.

Unexpected Mercy

John 5:2 (ESV) Now 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.

It interesting that the name of the pool is Bethesda which translated means "House of mercy". Indeed, for this man, this place became a house where he encountered the personified mercy of God, Jesus.

Mercy is defined as a love that responds to human need in an unexpected or unmerited way. At its core mercy is forgiveness, the canceling of a debt or the removal of just consequences.

Jesus not only showed kindness in healing this man but also in releasing him of the consequences of a bad choice that led to his condition.

John 5:14 (ESV) 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."

(The Passion Translation) A short time later, Jesus found the man at the temple and said to him, "Look at you now! You're healed! Walk away from your sin so that nothing worse will happen to you."

Again, Mercy is defined as a love that responds to human need in an unexpected or unmerited way. At its core mercy is forgiveness, the canceling of a debt or the removal of just consequences.

Is this not what we all received when we were forgiven of our sins?

Jesus is mercy – He is Love that responded to the human need of forgiveness in an unexpected and unmerited way. He laid down His life for us, removing the consequences of our sins which was death and eternal damnation.

Ephesians 2:4, 5 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Romans 6:23 (AMP) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God [that is, His remarkable, overwhelming gift of grace to believers] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus is the solution. Sadly, many people don't see it

There were a lot of people who are suffering at the pool of Bethesda who are eagerly waiting for a miracle but they are looking to a superstitious belief that an angel will stir the water and the first one to get into the pool will be healed.

The answer to their life condition (Jesus) is standing in the midst of them and they don't see it.

It's in this atmosphere of human desperation and great need that Jesus shows up and unlike many other accounts where he heals the multitudes he focuses on just one guy.

John 5:6-7 (ESV) When 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?" ⁷ 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."

It is interesting to note that the solution to the man's problem was Jesus, but he, like everyone else around the pool, couldn't see it. He was focused on getting to the pool. He wasn't looking to Jesus for the healing he just wanted to use Jesus to help him get to the pool.

Of course, as we see in the passage he doesn't know who Jesus is but, Jesus knows who he is and what he did to get himself into this state.

The fact that he didn't know who Jesus was means that his faith was not involved. What took place in his life is all on the grace and mercy of Jesus.

Strange question "Do you want to be healed?"

It isn't clear why Jesus asked this question? Perhaps to locate his faith, to get his attention or to awaken his expectation.

What we do know is that the man's response doesn't point to faith or hopefulness. He didn't say, "yes, I want to be healed", instead he makes excuses as to why he didn't have a chance or even expect to be healed.

"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."

He had no one who stayed with him long enough to assist him into the water.

What he didn't realize was that his answer was right in front of him. His name was Jesus!

The man's predicament

- He didn't expect to be healed. He had been in this condition for so long that his paralysis went beyond physical. He had lost all hope.
- He didn't have any friends or family to help. Someone carried him there but they didn't stay.
- He didn't deserve to be healed. He must have done something pretty bad in his youth that brought on his condition
- He didn't really know who Jesus.

Doesn't this describe our spiritual state before we met Christ. We didn't expect to be saved, we didn't deserve to be saved, no friend or family could save us and we didn't really know Jesus as the savior.

The good news for this man was that, he didn't know Jesus but, Jesus knew who he was.

This day was a day that mercy would be expressed to him. The manifested, incarnate love of God was standing before him ready to meet his human need of healing and forgiveness in an unexpected and unmerited way.

John 5:8-9 (ESV) Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Wow! What a miracle, an act of mercy to a man who didn't even ask for it. He didn't even expect to be healed. Of the hundreds of people who were lame, blind and maimed, he was chosen to receive mercy and healing.

This is the gospel. Unmerited forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ!

Jesus was the manifested, incarnate love and mercy of God sent to meet the human need of healing and forgiveness in an unexpected and unmerited way

Ungrateful response

John 5:9-11 (ESV) 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.'"

Sadly, the story doesn't end like many of the other stories where Jesus encounters people and extends mercy to them.

His response was not like the Samaritan woman at the well who was so excited to have encountered Jesus that she told the whole town to come and meet him.

Nor did he respond like the demoniac from Gadara who was delivered from a legion of demons when he encountered Jesus. He was so grateful that he wanted to follow Jesus. Instead, Jesus gave him a mission to go and tell his friends and family about the mercy God had shown him.

Even Zacchaeus the tax collector was so moved by his encounter with Jesus that he repented and wanted to make restitution for his sins by paying back double those he had cheated.

The man by the pool who was delivered from being an invalid for 38 years displayed indifference and ingratitude.

Notice that he was healed but never went to find out who actually did it. When confronted by the Pharisees as to why he was carrying his bed he tried to evade any responsibility for violating tradition by saying he was just following orders.

He was more concerned with what the religious leaders thought of him than finding out who his healer was.

John 5:14-15 (ESV) 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." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

This man seemed to have no gratitude to Jesus: his conduct put him in a bad light. He went and told the Pharisees that it was Jesus who gave him the orders to break the rules.

What a contrast to the response of the blind man who was healed in John 9 who came to the defense of Jesus. The blind man was willing to be rejected by the Pharisees than to speak against the one who had shown him mercy.

Some people receive and experience the goodness of God but soon forget or chose not to follow Him.

A physical miracle experience is not a spiritual conversion experience.

What about us? How have we responded to the mercy of God? Does our life reflect a heart that is truly grateful for the forgiveness of sins? Have we forgotten how good the Lord has been to us?