

*Jesus, Still the Great Physician*  
John 5:1-9a

In the times in which we find ourselves, how do we trust God when so much seems uncertain?

Again and again, Jesus changed lives through his unique power and love. Today, we will meet someone who was sick for 38 years before he was healed by our Lord. We'll learn from him to trust the timing of God even when it seems to make no sense to us.

John 5 records a miracle of Jesus found nowhere else in Scripture. Verse 2: *"Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate, a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda."*

Dr. Jim Denison shares: "The Sheep Gate was likely the entrance through which sheep and lambs were brought from the neighboring fields to the Temple for sacrifice. Through this gate, the Lamb of God came to heal a crippled man, as one day he would die for the spiritual healing of our crippled world.

Here lay a "pool" that would have been about 200 feet wide and 300 feet long. The pool was called Bethesda, a term meaning "House of Mercy." Jesus fulfilled its name this day.

Beside this pool *"a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed"* (v. 3). Why were they there? Verse 7 supplies the answer: *"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred."* There is a subterranean spring beneath the pool which bubbles up occasionally, stirring its waters. The popular belief was that the first person who entered the water after it was stirred would be healed.

We meet the suffering man Jesus came to heal in verse 5: *"One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to be healed?'"* (v. 6).

The crippled man could not come to Jesus physically and did not know to ask Jesus to come to him. So Jesus met him at the point of his great need.

But first he asked what seems to us a probing question: *"Do you want to be healed?"*

Where do you need his healing touch today? Jesus knows your struggle. In fact, “*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him*” (Matthew 6:8). Jesus is calling to us in our struggle, for he shares it with us. Even in the valley of the shadow of death, he is with us (Psalm 23:4). He promised that he would never leave or forsake us (Matthew 28:20). He hurts as we hurt and calls to us in the adversity of our lives.

But some of us feel that we are beyond his help. The world would have said the same of this disabled man. In Jesus’ day, popular theology taught that physical illness was proof of spiritual judgment. A person with a physical birth defect, as may have been the case with this man, was under the judgment of God.

No self-respecting rabbi would have stopped for this man, but Jesus did. [P] Perhaps you think no one cares about you or your struggle today. If we knew your secrets, we would reject you; if the world knew your problems, it would turn on you. But not Jesus. He went to this man, as he will come to you. *He stands ready to meet us where we need him most.*

James 4:2 says, “*You do not have, because you do not ask.*” So ... *Seek His Help.*

### **Trust His Heart**

The disabled man replied to Jesus’ question, “Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. *While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down before me*” (v. 7). He wanted to be well but could not accomplish this on his own.

Notice how little he asked of Jesus. He believed that he would be healed if he could be the first one into the pool after the spring stirred its waters. And so, he wanted Jesus simply to carry him a few feet into the water. Jesus stood ready to heal his body, and the man instead asked him to help him get wet.

Are we so different? Do you come to worship to hear a good sermon & moving music, or to meet the Lord of the universe? Am I speaking these words to explain the text, or to lead you to the One who inspired it & wants to repeat its miraculous power in our lives today?

We might object that the crippled man didn’t know who Jesus really was. True, and this ignorance is his defense. But we have no such argument. When we give our need to Jesus, we must *trust his heart* and expect his best. For that is what he waits to give to us.

Our Lord says to the man, *“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”* (v. 8). He called the man to do something he had not done for 38 years. He did not carry the man to the water—he healed him so he could walk there himself. He did not offer him a temporary cure or help with the symptoms of his disability—he worked a miracle that banished this brokenness from his life forever. He told him to pick up his mat on which he had begged for so long.

And he told the disabled man to “walk.” He has not moved the muscles of his legs for 38 years! Even if a physician were to cure the cause of his paralysis, perhaps a rupture in the spine or nerves, his muscles would be so atrophied that years of physical therapy would be required. But not by Jesus. He did for the man far more than the man asked of him.

Jesus healed the crippled man, but he still had to get up with the power given him by God. Jesus restored his body, but told him to carry his own mat. Jesus cured his limbs, but required the man to use them himself. Jesus words, “Get up!” are more than an invitation; they are an imperative, a command to act upon the grace and power being offered to him. And *“At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked”* (v. 9).

When we trust our problem into Jesus’ hands, we are to expect the best from him. We often don’t understand his ways and feel that he is not hearing us or helping us. But he is offering what is best for us, whether we can understand it at the moment or not ... and I recognize that the moment you are in right now may feel like an excruciating lifetime.

One pastor writes: “Years ago, I was using a razor blade to scrape paint from a window one morning when one of our small boys came by. Attracted by the shiny “toy” in my hand, he wanted to play with it and was not happy that I wouldn’t give him. But of course, no amount of begging or anger would have persuaded me to give him what he wanted.”

When we stand with our Father in glory, we will see how many times He met our needs and answered our prayers. And how, often, he gave us even more.

Where do you need his touch today? [Pause] Seek His Help ... Trust His Heart ...

### **Wait for His Best**

Let’s consider one last piece. This man had been an invalid for 38 years, possibly lying beside this pool for all this time. Jesus would have traveled to Jerusalem, to the Temple,

since the time he was twelve to observe Passover, as well as the other pilgrimage festivals commanded in the Torah. Jesus is now in his early thirties. So, there had been two decades when the Son of God may have passed by this man in his infirmity.

If so, why would Jesus wait so long to heal this man? Why now?

Here we learn that God's timing is seldom our own. He tells us, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways*" (Isaiah 55:8). We see the parade through a hole in the fence; He sees it from the grandstand. He has a plan we cannot fathom which is relevant to the entire universe for all of eternity. And He works this plan in ways that are best, though we seldom understand that fact at the time.

When Joseph was languishing in Potiphar's prison for a crime he didn't commit, he could not know that God was orchestrating events that would bring him into Pharaoh's palace, and lead to the saving of countless lives, including his own family, during a nation-wide 7-year famine. When Paul was imprisoned in Philippi for proclaiming the gospel, he could not know that God would send an earthquake that would lead to the jailer's conversion. When John was exiled to the prison colony of Patmos to spend the rest of his days, he could not know that the risen Christ would meet him there and give him the Revelation.

Where does it seem to you that Jesus is passing you by? [P] That he knows your need but has not met it? That his timing is not yours?

For the redeemed in Christ, for the adopted of God, the testimony of Scripture is that our Father will either *give what we ask* OR *do what is best*. And when His timing is not ours, there may be reasons we cannot understand, but there is still a faithful God we can trust.

What infirmity has found you? What burden or brokenness have you carried for so long? Would you seek Jesus' help ... trust his heart ... and wait for his best?

Charles Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of his generation, but he was no stranger to pain. He battled a burning kidney inflammation called Bright's Disease, as well as rheumatism and neuritis. He also suffered from depression for many years.

Here was his response: "*All our infirmities, whatever they are, are just opportunities for God to display His gracious work in us.*" [Pause]

Where do you see his gracious work in your life? ... Where can you trust him more? ...

How will you wait on him?

It's been said, "The sun never quits shining. Sometimes, clouds just get in the way."

What clouds would you trust to the Son today?