

JOHN

AND THE WORD WAS GOD

THE HEALING AT THE POOLS OF BETHESDA

John 5:1–17

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Deuteronomy 5:12–15 | Leviticus 19:1–3, 14–18 | Matthew 12:9–14

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 3.22.26

SUMMARY

This is one of several accounts of Jesus healing a paralytic, but it is unique in that Jesus came to him rather than the opposite. There would have been many people hoping for healing beside the pools of Bethesda, yet Jesus chose to ask only this man if he wanted to be healed. Why would he not want to be healed? He had been paralyzed for 38 years and was sitting beside a pool because he believed in a superstition that the water could heal him. However, his response was not “yes, I want to be healed,” but rather an explanation of why he couldn’t be healed. Jesus’ reply was to tell him to get up, take up his bed, and walk. He was healed, and he obeyed what Jesus said. This stands in contrast to the previous account of the official whose son was ill (John 4:46–54). The official came to Jesus and asked for healing, while Jesus went to the paralytic and asked if he wanted to be healed. In both cases, Jesus provided healing. Scripture does not explicitly say the paralytic believed, but it can be inferred from two points. First, Jesus does not offer partial healing. Second, we see it in the man’s actions—he didn’t know who Jesus was or where he went, but we learn that “Jesus found him in the temple” (John 5:14). This man, who had put his hope in a superstition, went immediately to the temple after being healed. He knew the true source of his healing even before he learned Jesus’ name.

Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders saw this and accused the man and Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus understood that the Sabbath was given for man’s restoration—“so it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12). The Jews tried to earn God’s favor by keeping the law, while the paralytic received Jesus’ gift of grace. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of John 5:1–17.

A superstition like the pools of Bethesda might sound outdated. In what ways might we place our hope in something other than Jesus for our needs today? Does trusting in Jesus ensure earthly healing (consider the others at the pools of Bethesda)?

What do the examples of John 4:46–54 and John 5:1–17 teach us about how the church, as the body of Christ, should minister to those in need? Should we expect them to come to us, or should we go to them?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.