

John 5 Part A: You Can't Always Get What You Want

“You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes you just might find, You get what you need. “
Keith Richards / Mick Jagger

The Healing at the Pool on the Sabbath

John 5:1-16 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 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?” 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.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. 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.” But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 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 man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Topics to consider: Story from original texts, verse by verse commentary, symbolism

Sheep Gate- city gate close to the temple to let in sheep and goats brought through for sacrifice

Bethesda pool- This story about Jesus’ miracle suggests a long history of healing at the site. Roman medicinal baths constructed at the Bethesda Pool only a century or two later reflect this continued tradition. When Christians controlled Jerusalem in the Byzantine and Crusader periods, they liked to mark the sites of Jesus’ miracles and other important events in his life, so they added a chapel and churches that now cover the Bethesda Pool complex. Bethesda “House of Mercy” or Bethzatha “House of the Olive”. There were two pools and they were fed by a subterranean stream that every now and again bubbled up and disturbed the waters. The belief was that the disturbance was caused by an angel, and that the first person to get into the pool would be healed of any illness.

Five roofed colonnades- a puzzling feature suggesting an unusual five-sided pool, which most scholars dismissed as an unhistorical literary creation. Yet when this site was excavated, it revealed a rectangular pool with two basins separated by a wall—thus a five-sided pool—and each side had a portico. Some scholars think the whole story is an allegory and the five porticos stand for the five books of the law. The law could show man his sin but could not heal it.

Invalids- many people sought the Bethesda Pool’s healing powers. The allegory might be the people of Israel. The man of 38 years may be the 38 years of the wandering in the desert or the number of centuries waiting for the Messiah.

Jesus heals- healing miracles, types of healings, ways of healings

Instead let's look at the story as a play and analyze the players, settings and actions:

And let's do it with scripture, art appreciation, church history, and rock 'n roll!

THE PLAYERS:

Jesus- Son of God, Son of man

Man at pool- invalid for 38 years, hopeless, alone, obviously never going to get to the water in time

Jews- orthodox Jews; Pharisees, Sadducees. The religious/cultural leaders of the time; ever- watching, ever-judging others and Jesus, and waiting for a mistake to act upon

THE SETTING:

The Sabbath

Bethesda- traditional place of miraculous healing. Verse 3b-4, the missing verse: Later manuscripts added possibly for clarification of superstition practices of the day:

“John 5:3b, waiting for the moving of the water; 4* for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had”



BLOCH, CARL - HEALING AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA (1883)

Action:

Jesus: “Do you want to get well?”

Man: “Sir, I have no one to help me get into the pool first.”

Jesus: “Get up! Pick up your bed and walk.”

Man obeys, is healed, picks up his mat and walks away.

Sidebar: Jesus asked the question with the intent of stirring up hope in the man. Or He

was really wondering if the man wanted to be healed. After 38 years, the man had his comfort zone and way of life. Others were taking care of him and he really didn't have much to worry about.

The man's answer to Jesus seemed more of an excuse than a desire to be well. Jesus seems to be asking a yes or no question. The man tried to make things more difficult than it needed to be.

Jesus then commands the man to do something seemingly impossible. Obey. Get up and take your stuff with you. God's supernatural power instantaneously cured the man and off he went. No recognition of who Jesus was (called him sir, not Rabbi or Teacher) and no thanks or gratitude afterward is noted.

Let's pick up the action again:

Jews: "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

Man: "The guy who healed me said I had to."

Jews: "Who told you to work on the Sabbath?"

Man: "IDK"

Analysis: - Jews were upset that their Sabbatical Law was being broken; ignoring the fact a man was healed miraculously after 38 years. They wanted to know who commended the man to break the law. The man knew the law and was willing to blame someone else, even the one who healed him, to get the Jews off his back.

You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes you might find, you get what you need!

The lame man wanted someone to help him get into the water once it was disturbed. What he got was a command to do something. The man needed to listen and obey God even if it may be outside the cultural understanding of how things work. The man obeyed Jesus when commanded to get up. He was healed. After 38 years he got what he needed, he was healed. Prior to that he had no help, no hope, no desire to help himself.

In our life, we are not to lose hope. We have hurts. We may be healed, we may have to work through our pain, we may have to learn to accept troubles on this side of heaven. All these results can be used to minister to others in similar circumstances.

Jesus wanted the man healed. He also warned the man later at the temple to stop sinning or something worse may happen to him. Jesus is interested in healing both physically and spiritually. Jesus also was using this miracle to address who He was and His authority, but more on that next week.

1500 years later: a hurting man wants one thing, but he gets what he (the church) needs.

The players:



Albert of Brandenburg, aka Archbishop Albert of Mainz

A young bishop—too young by church laws—who was already bishop over two bishoprics, he desired an additional archbishopric over Mainz. This too was against church laws. So Albert appealed to the Pope in Rome, Leo X. From the De Medici family, Leo X greedily allowed his tastes to exceed his financial resources. The pope needed money to fund the building of St Peter's Basilica, including paying the artists and sculptors, Raphael and Michelangelo. When Albert of Mainz appealed for a papal dispensation, Leo X was ready to deal. Albert, with the papal blessing, would sell indulgences for past, present, and future sins. They would split the revenues.



Martin Luther, monk and scholar

The Holy Roman Catholic Church

Jesus, as manifested in the Holy Scriptures

Setting: The year is 1517, the place is Wittenberg, Germany

Action: It started on All Saints' Eve, 1517, when Luther publicly objected to the way preacher Johann Tetzel was selling indulgences. These were documents prepared by the church and bought by individuals either for themselves or on behalf of the dead that would release them from punishment due to their sins. As Tetzel preached, "Once the coin into the coffer clings, a soul from purgatory heavenward springs!"

Luther questioned the church's trafficking in indulgences and called for a public debate of 95 theses he had written. Luther sent a letter to Archbishop Albert, who was responsible for the Catholic Church in this area, and also nailed his theses on the door of the large church in his area, like today's Facebook.

But why October 31? November 1 held a special place in the church calendar as All Soul's Day. On November 1, 1517, a massive exhibit of newly acquired relics would be on display at Wittenberg, Luther's home city. Pilgrims would come from all over, genuflect before the relics, and take hundreds, if not thousands, of years off time in purgatory.

Luther posts his 95 theses on the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg:



DISPUTATION OF DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER ON THE
POWER AND EFFICACY OF INDULGENCES

OCTOBER 31, 1517

Out of love for the truth and the desire to bring it to light, the following propositions will be discussed at Wittenberg, under the presidency of the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Sacred Theology, and Lecturer in Ordinary on the same at that place. Wherefore he requests that those who are unable to be present and debate orally with us, may do so by letter.

In the Name our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said Poenitentiam agite (repent), willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.

27. They preach man who say that so soon as the penny jingles into the money-box, the soul flies out [of purgatory].

End Scene

Analysis: Luther claimed that the repentance required by Christ in order for sins to be forgiven involves inner spiritual repentance rather than merely external sacramental confession. He argued that indulgences led Christians to avoid true repentance and sorrow for sin, believing that they can forgo it by purchasing an indulgence. They also, according to Luther, discourage Christians from giving to the poor and performing other acts of mercy, believing that indulgence certificates were more spiritually valuable.

One of Luther's 95 Theses simply declares, "The Church's true treasure is the gospel of Jesus Christ." The church had lost sight of the gospel because it had long ago papered over the pages of God's Word with

layer upon layer of tradition. Tradition always brings about systems of works, of earning your way back to God. It was true of the Pharisees, and it was true of medieval Roman Catholicism.

You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes you might find, you get what you need!

Luther wanted a debate about indulgences and the actions of the Catholic Church.

Instead, Luther got reformation. His 95 Theses spread across Germany as a call to reform, and the issue quickly became not indulgences but the authority of the church. Events quickly accelerated. At a public debate in Leipzig in 1519, when Luther declared that "a simple layman armed with the Scriptures" was superior to both pope and councils without them.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

As the Scriptures were studied by Luther, God revealed to Luther what became known as the Five Solas:

Sola Scriptura (**Scripture alone**): The Bible alone is our highest authority.

Sola Fide (**faith alone**): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Sola Gratia (**grace alone**): We are saved by the grace of God alone.

Solus Christus (**Christ alone**): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King.

Soli Deo Gloria (**to the glory of God alone**): We live for the glory of God alone.

Luther, and the Reformers who followed, were guided by the conviction that the church of their day had drifted away from the essential, original teachings of Christianity, especially regarding what it was teaching about salvation—how people can be forgiven of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and receive eternal life with God. The Reformation sought to re-orient Christianity on the original message of Jesus and the early church.

Reformers were helping the church find its way back to God's Word as the only authority for faith and life, and leading the church back to the glorious doctrines of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It kindled the fires of missionary endeavors, it led to hymn writing and congregational singing, and it led to the centrality of the sermon and preaching for the people of God. It is the celebration of a theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural transformation.

Application for us here and now? Are we hurting? Invalids? What do we want and is it what we need?

The players:

Invalid man- Us? Are we hurting? Are we comfortable in our current catholic-like conditions?

Jews- society- dictating right or wrong, criticizing, watching, judging, persecuting, peer pressure

Jesus- The same yesterday, today and tomorrow

Setting: Western/American Christian culture, our Edmond lifestyle, our church

Action: Living our daily life

Not necessarily a bad thing, probably not a bad thing, but is it lukewarm? too comfortable?

Revelation 3:14-17 To the Church in Laodicea

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Jesus / God's Word says:

Rev 3:18-19 “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. “

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.”

End of scene

Analysis: In our human attempts to look good in serving God, there is the temptation to perform certain religious duties rather than to truly obey God. Even good activities, such as giving money to charity, attending church services, or praying in public, are not as important to God as obeying His commands.

You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes you might find, you get what you need!

We ask God for peace, health, protection, success, joy, safety, wisdom, a purposeful life, etc.

Jesus asks us to obey. We need to listen and obey God even if it may be something outside the cultural understanding of how things work, or outside our comfort zone. When we do, we can have our minds transformed and renewed (perhaps *reformed*). We can discern His perfect will for us. We can live in a deeper fellowship with Him, a blessed life that we can enjoy now, through all the trials and tribulation of life here on earth.

So what do you want.? What do you need?