

The Word of the Lord by Joe Lim

Our passage today comes from the Book of John, the 5th chapter, verses 1-17. In it we find a man who had an infirmity for 38 years. And in our passage, we see Jesus healing a man of his physical condition, which interestingly took place next to a pool that could heal the sickness of one person who was able to enter the water, at the exact moment it is stirred (customarily believed to be the work of an angel). What we see here in this story is an encounter with Jesus that led to a radical transformation—one of the many stories of people who would have this type of life changing encounters with Jesus.

Unfortunately, when we read stories like these in scripture, especially if we've heard the story many times over, they tend to blend together and turn into one big "mish-mosh" of a miracle. I can attest that I am no different, perfectly displayed last week when Ryan asked me: JOE! What passage will you be speaking on? I told him, OH! It's the story of the BLIND man at the pool! You know, where Jesus spit and made mud to heal his blindness!

So although I got a lot of it wrong, the passage we will read today is a powerful one that has deep implications to our understanding of the heart of God, and His desire for us. You see, what Jesus desires from us is never far from what He is doing in us. When we have fixed our eyes on the hope we have in Christ, without being overcome by our circumstances and trials, that we are able to see his power made perfect in our lives.

Hear the Word of the Lord

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

² Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" 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 making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat." ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?" ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. ¹⁴ Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working."

This is the word of the Lord – Thanks be to God

Illustration story

- Kate's chronic kidney disease. Incurable but we hoped that God would heal it, as we cut off medications and went with holistic treatments.
- December 2018, Kate's BP skyrockets and was hospitalized.

- For Kate especially, it was a time where all her hopes and expectations were suddenly clouded by uncertainty and doubt.
- Resulting in the brink of kidney failure, the beginning of dialysis, and the need for a kidney donor.
- Even though the outcome was not what we had hoped, every step of the way, God showing his love for us and his faithfulness in spite of circumstances

So I think we can relate to the man in the passage. He is like us in that we all have had moments in our lives where we don't feel like we have it all together. He was a man who had clearly made many attempts to fix the problems of his life and failed at every attempt. And I think the trials that we've faced in past, currently face, or will face in our future, seem to all have one thing in common. They are all circumstances that are tremendously difficult and we naturally (and understandably) become fixated on the problem. And our fixation with the problem generally grows even deeper when our attempts to fix the problem doesn't produce a good resolution or positive results. In the same way I imagine this man in our passage had run out of hope. So when he came face to face with Jesus, the supreme source of healing for his ailments, he insisted that Jesus solve his problem by some other means other than Jesus himself. We too in our agony and defeat, when faced with the hope we have in Christ, would rather have the **means** by which our troubles can be fixed, rather than asking for the **source** of our hope: which is Jesus

At other times, when we come face to face with the idea of a Savior who can redeem and restore us, we question God's response and ask, "who is the man who said "take up your mat and walk." Because you see, just like the Jews and Jewish leaders that surrounded and questioned the man, they who mistakenly seized on the trivial conditions in which the miraculous occurred, and failed to see the hope and transformation that had just occurred before them... Yes, just like them we question the authority of Jesus and we question what God is doing in our lives. We look at the circumstances of how God is working in our lives, and when He does something miraculous, we question His answer and wonder why He didn't provide an answer or remedy for our immediate concerns. When God works, and God answers our prayers, many times we would rather have God answer us in the way we hoped, rather than submit to God's authority and let God reveal himself in the midst of our circumstances and fears. When we pass up on what God is doing, we are most certainly, in those moments, forgetting the source of our greatest joy—Jesus Christ.

Before we close this message, I want to read you a passage that I came across recently that brought me a deep sense of hope and perspective.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, ¹⁸because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

The places where God leads us, and the answers we received in response to our tear-filled prayers, may or may not always be the solutions that we hoped for or in fact what we desperately wanted. Instead, God's desire for us, is and always will be, that we will fall more deeply and more intimately in love with Him. Every solution that God provides and every problem He resolves is rooted in this intent.

When our backs are against the wall, and all hope is lost, when we have given up and thrown our hopes to the furthest outskirts of a possible solution. When our understanding is darkened by the circumstances that cloud our lives, and it blurs our vision to the point where life no longer makes any

sense. It is in those moments, and it is my prayer this morning, that we will remember ***the hope we have in Jesus***. That our hope is not in a simple solution, but in the life-transforming, all encompassing, unfathomable work of Jesus Christ—shown and demonstrated on the cross, who took us from the grave and healed us of our greatest infirmity, the sins of our lives, and redeemed us (we who once were dead) by giving us new life. I pray we remember, as we read in our passage today, that God is still at work in our lives and in the circumstances of our lives. Because our hope is not found in anything or anyone except our Lord and Savior. May we always remember that. Today and every day of our lives.

Let us pray.