

The Healing by the Pool

John 5:1-47

Read as:

John 5:1-24

John 5:25-47



“Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and continues his redemptive work to save humankind from their sins 24/7”

Today we begin the first of four sermons from John’s gospel, each with a focus on a different Jewish religious celebration.

The first is The Sabbath.

It centres on a controversy that erupts between Jesus and the Jewish leaders about His healing of a man on the Sabbath.

It has all the marks of a crime novel or courtroom trial.

Firstly the alleged Crime. Then the accusation by the Jewish leaders.

The defence by Jesus of his actions and the counter accusation by Jesus of the Jewish leaders.

So John sets the scene by the pool of Bethesda.

There is a crippled man who has been there for 38 years hoping to be healed when the pool is disturbed.

But of course he cannot reach the pool in time.

In all likelihood he never will.

Jesus opens conversation with the man and asks what he can do for him.

We may think that Jesus has asked a rather obvious question but John knows that Jesus question holds a deeper meaning.

It's a question that deals with something much more important than physical healing.

Now, remember the opening lines of Genesis. The creation account. God's says, "Let there be light" and it was so.

As John pulls back the curtain to show us who Jesus really is we hear similar creative words spoken by the Messiah, "Get up and Walk"

And that is exactly what happens.

Keep that parallel in mind when you hear what Jesus later says to the Jewish leaders.

For Now let's look at events that follow.

Firstly a crime has been committed. A man has been caught carrying his bedroll on the Sabbath.

In order to deflect the blame off himself the man "dobs Jesus in".

And so the Jewish leaders go after Jesus and bring him in for questioning.

First accusation: "You are accused of breaking the Sabbath. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Jesus responds, "My father is always working and I am working too." God may have rested on the Sabbath but not to the extent that the Jews had twisted the understanding of that command.

Moreover God's Sabbath rest has been broken by our sin. Ever since the fall, God has been working, seeking lost sinners and saving them.

God may have rested from his creating but not from his saving activity.

So God continued to save, heal and sustain his creation day in day out seven days a week. Because Jesus is God's son he does likewise.

Therein lies the second accusation. "You claim to be God!"

So Jesus is brought in on a misdemeanour and ends up being accused of a capital offence.

Are you guilty of this Jesus? Are you indeed God's son?

Yes he replies. Guilt on five counts.

V19) He does the work of God.

V20) He knows the plans of God.

V21) He has the power to give life as God.

V22) He renders divine judgement as God.

V23) He accepts the honour attributed to God.

Then he brings four witnesses to testify to the truth of his assertion.

V33) He has the testimony of John the Baptist. John 1:34.

V36) His miraculous signs.

V37) He has the testimony of God the Father. Matthew 3:17

V39) The scriptures that point to him as Messiah.

Having given his defence and having called on his witnesses he then proceeds to turn the tables and bring charges against his accusers.

V37) They have never heard the father's voice. GUILTY!

V38) They do not have the word of God within them. GUILTY!

V39) They don't understand scripture. GUILTY!

V43) They have rejected God's son. GUILTY!

V42) They do not love God. GUILTY!

V44-47) They have rejected the testimony of Moses. GUILTY!

No one puts the judge of the universe on trial without himself being put on trial.

The law has spoken. We are guilty. But for those who repent, the Judge himself pays the price for our crimes.

Now remember that I said something much more than physical healing was going on here.

No matter how you look at this miraculous sign, it illustrates God's grace.

The fact that Jesus came to this man, spoke to him, healed him, and then later met him in the temple is proof of the Saviour's grace and mercy.

In some ways this man is a picture of us all; impotent to save ourselves, waiting hopelessly for our final demise and unable to reach salvation by ourselves.

But Jesus brings hope to the hopeless. Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath is still working to save his broken people.

What of you friend?

Where do you see yourself in this story?

May it be that you receive Jesus words, "Raise up and walk" as your invitation to follow him and live life to the full.

Amen