

Making Doubt Disappear

Introduction:

Today we are going to take a final look at one of Jesus encounters with someone on the street. In John 5 we find a man who has been an invalid for 38 years and daily lingers near the pool of Bethesda waiting for some mystical stirring of the waters for legends held that the first one in got healed.

We live in a society of victims and some volunteers.

Frivolous lawsuits: You decide which ones won their case?

In February 1992, Stella Liebeck ordered a cup of coffee to go from McDonalds. Liebeck was sitting in the passenger seat of her nephew's car, which was pulled over so she could add sugar to her coffee. While removing the cup's lid, Liebeck spilled her hot coffee, burning her legs. It was determined that Liebeck suffered third degree burns on over six percent of her body. Originally, Liebeck sought \$20,000 in damages. McDonalds refused to settle out of court. However, they should have. Liebeck was ultimately awarded \$200,000 in compensatory damages, which was reduced to \$160,000 because she was found to be twenty percent at fault. She was also awarded \$2.7 million in punitive damages.

In May 2003, Stephen Joseph of San Francisco sued Kraft foods for putting trans-fat in their Oreo cookies. Joseph wanted an injunction to order Kraft to stop selling Oreos to children. Once the media caught wind of Joseph's lawsuit, the media blitz became too much for him to handle. He decided to drop the suit.

In 1992, 23-year old Karen Norman accidentally backed her car into Galveston Bay after a night of drinking. Norman couldn't operate her seat belt and drowned. Her passenger managed to disengage herself and make it to shore. Norman's parents sued Honda for making a seat belt their drunken daughter (her blood alcohol level was .17 – nearly twice the legal limit) couldn't open underwater. A jury found Honda seventy-five percent responsible for Karen's death and awarded the Norman family \$65 million. An appeals court threw out the case.

In 1991, Richard Harris sued Anheuser-Busch for \$10,000 for false advertising. Harris claimed to suffer from emotional distress in addition to mental and physical injury. Why? Because when he drank beer, he didn't have any luck with the ladies, as promised in the TV ads. Harris also didn't like that he got sick sometimes after he drank. The case was thrown out of court.

In 1995, Robert Lee Brock, a Virginia prison inmate, decided to take a new approach to the legal system. After filing a number of unsuccessful lawsuits against the prison system, Brock sued himself. He claimed his civil rights and religious beliefs were violated when he allowed himself to get drunk. After all, it was inebriation that created his cycle of committing crimes and being

incarcerated. He demanded \$5 million from himself. However, since he didn't earn an income behind bars, he felt the state should pay. Needless to say, the case was thrown out.

At least he admitted he was his biggest problem. Many people blame others when they really need a mirror.

Some people are not victims...

Episode of Dr. Phil. A woman who was on his show said she had been in an abusive relationship for many years. "Mam, when you were first abused you were a victim but after this long you have become a volunteer, I have no help for you."

God doesn't want us to be victims or volunteers.

Jesus said, "I came that you might have life in abundance." John 10:10

John 5:1-9 – My Pain

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ²Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda[□] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

Pool of Bethesda: 5 porches as shelters for invalids.

means "house of mercy". This is a picture of the church. It paints the picture of some churches that are full of hurting people desperately in need of healing, but no one to help them. This place was not a house of mercy. It was a gathering place for sufferers. It was a place designed to merely protect the wounded people from the elements of the world.

People got by, had a little fellowship, might be there for one another in a deep crisis, but there was not presence of God, nobody got healed, physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually.

If lives are not being transformed it isn't the Gospel Jesus gave His life for.

John 5:5-7 – My Way

⁵One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶When 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 get well?"

⁷"Sir," the invalid replied, "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 ahead of me."

Religion can keep people trapped in performance, guilt, and doubt.

This man knew the religious way to get healed. Get by the pool & hope someone helps him in.

The problem was everyone was only helping themselves.

This is another problem with religion it is self-focused, self-centered, consumeristic. It does not give it only thinks of getting. It is the attitude that I have earned my place and you must find your own way. This judgment is especially focused on those outside the church. Apparently, there were people who gave him a handout. He had no family or friends who cared deeply for him. No one who cared more than just seeing that he live.

When Jesus offers healing to man he gives an objection or a reason, "I have no man." Rather than say yes we give excuses for why we are not made whole. We reason that we cannot change, or our weakness or sin is not that bad, or situation is special.

Jesus doesn't want excuses He wants us to have life, abundant life. He wants us to be made whole. We talked about this a few weeks ago. Nine lepers were cleansed only one was made whole.

Jesus offers this man healing in the form of a question, "will you be made whole?" That is interesting isn't it. Why would anyone refuse healing? Maybe they are too content with where they are. Maybe their weakness has become their excuse.

Many times we blame others for our condition. Sometimes rightfully so. But **we** have a choice about our current situation and whether or not we will stay there.

When do the structures and rules of the Church help to keep people "sick" or "stuck in their condition" rather than offering new life through the power of God?

Blaming others is an easy trap to fall into because it makes us stay where we are because we have a reason. A reason is not an excuse.

Another interesting point is that this man only had one solution to his problem. Even with God standing before and offering him healing he could not see past his own limited knowledge and opinion.

Do we fall into this trap of limiting God to our ways and our means with which He has to work on our behalf. We must not limit what God can do by only acting according to our ways and not His.

Andre's illusion with egg and handkerchief

Scene from Evan Almighty. If you ask God for your family to come closer does He just make it happen or does He create circumstances that will bring them together?

John 5:8-10 – Jesus Commands

⁸*Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”⁹At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

Jesus responds to the man with commands:

1. “Get up” – Change your mind about your situation, have faith.
2. “Pick-up your mat” – Carry that thing to God.
3. “Walk” – Do what healed people do. (me eating chicken after getting sick on chicken)

God hasn't called us to be victims, or volunteers but victors.

Don't you think the man could have just moved a little bit closer to the water over 38 years? If he moved just a few inches a day he could have got to the edge and rolled in.

Why didn't Jesus do the miracle at the end of Sabbath (6PM)?

The guy had been waiting 38 years. Same thing happens in Matt. 12, and John 9. Why? Jesus wanted to draw out the emptiness and misapplication of religion. The Sabbath was a time to stop work to reflect on God.

Talk a little about the importance of a Sabbath. It is not just rest from the past week but it is preparation for the week to come.

Jesus not only breaks the Sabbath but He causes the man to break the Sabbath as well.

The real "crime" in this healing is Jesus' command, "Take your mat." It was the carrying of the mat on the sabbath -- an act that others could easily see -- that led to the controversy. Jeremiah had stated: "Thus says the LORD: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on the sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the sabbath or do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors" (Jer. 17:21-22).

John 5:11-16 – Jesus Works

¹¹*But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”*

¹²*So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”*

¹³*The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.*

¹⁴Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

¹⁶So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

Similar to story in John 9. Both involve a long time illness, a healing on the Sabbath, attack from religious people (Pharisees), and a pool of water.

Jesus also confronts an attitude held by some that God was still "resting" after finishing the work of creation. Jesus declares that God is working (5:17), even on that sabbath day! And "like Father, like son -- the son is also working.

It has been suggested that most American Christians are "functional atheists". While they believe in God, they function as if God were still resting. We don't expect God to break into our lives. We don't expect God to be involved in our congregations.

Verse 14 is somewhat troubling in that Jesus tells him to not sin anymore less something worse happen. Is this a threat of Divine retribution with a worse sickness God would put on the man?

I believe Jesus was challenging the man and us to walk by faith, first and foremost faith in Him for our salvation and eternity. Secondly, to stay in God's will and walk close to God and under His Divine protection and covering.

In this particular case this guy has a habit of blaming others. I think this may be the sin Jesus refers because when he was questioned by the Pharisees about carrying his bedroll, he immediately blames Jesus before for telling him to do so, even though he doesn't know His name.

Challenge to us: Help others find their way into the water. Better yet, take the water of life to them. Out of your innermost being flows rivers of living water. God wants to work His magic through us.