



Sermon Series: ALL SIGNS POINT TO JESUS

To be used with Session: The Sign of His Authority

Sermon Title Possibilities: A PICK-ME-UP

Scripture: John 5:1-11, 17-20

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “All Signs” this sermon demonstrates that Jesus works in a way that goes beyond our expectations and often in unexpected ways. The first sign, Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), the wine not only exceeded expectation, but it was provided in an unexpected way. The second sign, Jesus heals the royal official’s son (John 4:46-54). Instead of coming in person like the official expected, Jesus spoke a Word, and from a distance, and the son was healed. However, a healing beyond the son’s took place, as the official’s entire household came to believe in Jesus. The apostle Paul acknowledged that God can do above and beyond all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

Introduction: The site of the pool of Bethesda was discovered in 1888. However, prior to its discovery, most scholars dismissed its existence as an unhistorical literary creation. Its discovery and the Bible’s accurate description of it, serves as a reminder that the Bible is not the stuff of fables but facts. While archeological discoveries do not prove our faith, they help to fortify our faith not only in the accuracy of the Bible, but in the historical Jesus, whom the Bible testifies, was a healer.

“He’s Able,” is a 2008 song written by Deitrick Haddon. Based on Ephesians 3:20, Haddon writes about the God who does exceedingly, abundantly above all you could ask of Him. As a result, he encourages the listener to not give up on God, because He has not given up on them. Are you in a situation where you’ve given up escaping? Are you in a place where, based on your ability or inability, you’ve given up on yourself? Have you given up on anyone having the power to help? Have you become so desperate that you’ve started looking to the superstitious because quietly, you have given up on God? No matter how long you’ve been stuck in your circumstance; God sees, God cares, and God can pick you up. A pick-me-up is something that stimulates, lifts, restores, or boosts a mood. God can not only pick you up, but He can also restore your life!

JESUS SEES NO AUTHORITY (5:1-7)

Authority can be defined as a person or organization that has power to command. In our text, Jesus saw many people who had no authority to change their conditions and therefore were subject to their circumstances. It is the same for unbelievers in this world. They have no

authority to change their sinful condition. They are under the authority and power of “the ruler of this world” (*John 12:31; 16:11*), who “has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,” (*2 Cor. 4:4*). However, Jesus came to set us free from sin and deliver us from death (*Rom. 6:22-23*) “because the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me” (*John 14:30*), and all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth (*Matt. 28:18*).

Jesus was drawn to one man, who, for thirty-eighty years had no authority to walk. It’s a reminder that Jesus sees our conditions, sees our circumstances and His desire is to make us whole. No matter how longstanding our problems may be, Jesus can lift us out of them.

Jesus asked the question, “Do you want to get well?” It is not an easy question to answer when a person has built much of their life around incapability, and despondency has developed. In fact, the man did not answer the question but complained that others were to blame for his dilemma. However, when Jesus comes into our lives, He takes away our excuses for staying the same.

JESUS SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY (5:8-11)

Despite his non-answer, the man’s complaint implied that he wanted to be made well, he just needed some help. Jesus’s help was unexpected and beyond expected. The unexpected was Jesus’s command to “get up, pick up your mat and walk,” rather than putting the man in the water. The beyond expected was the man became instantly well. He immediately did what Jesus commanded. The only reasonable response to Jesus making us well is to obey His commands. The command to walk with his mat was a witness to his healing. It’s our walk with God that often opens doors for our testimony to what God has done for us. We also need to be ready for the implications of being healed, including enemy attack.

The Pharisees cherished their traditions over Scriptural truths. Despite the man testifying that he had been miraculously healed, the Pharisees were uninterested. Instead, they were concerned about the breaking of the Sabbath law by the carrying his mat. Thirty-nine categories of work were identified by the Pharisees as breaching the Sabbath (Milne, p.95), which actually made the Pharisees the true lawbreakers of the Sabbath. “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath” (*Mark 2:27, NLT*). Jesus met the need of a man who needed healing. Before we become too critical of the Pharisees, how many churches value their traditions over truth, moralizing over mercy, ethics without empathy, and have allowed legalism to replace love?

JESUS IS SUBJECT TO AUTHORITY (5:17-20)

Jesus claimed a unique relationship with the Father. In addition to being a Sabbath breaker, at least according to their traditions, the Pharisees understood this unique claim as Jesus making Himself equal to God. Jesus expressed His equality with Father as a oneness where the Son was so submitted to the authority of the Father that they were one in will and in the works, they performed. This fact gave Jesus the authority to do what only God could do.

“The Father is God sending and commanding, the Son is God sent and obedient” (Milne, 98). Sabbath breaker and a blasphemer were the two major reasons that the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus.

Jesus appealed to the fact that the Father was still working and therefore, being one with the Father, He was working as well. Even the rabbis conceded that God in His grace and mercy was constantly at work sustaining the world. If God showed grace and mercy, even on the Sabbath, how could one break the Sabbath by showing grace and mercy to a fellow human being? Even if the Pharisees wanted to argue that the Sabbath was broken by working, the Sabbath prohibited normal, daily work. The man’s normal “work” was laying on a mat, not carrying it!

As God’s people, we ought to be persons of grace and mercy, looking to sustain the lives of those who are in desperate and despondent circumstances, through the works of our hands and the words from our mouths.

Conclusion: The man by the pool of Bethesda never thanked Jesus for his healing. At first, he had no idea who healed him (5:13). It was only after Jesus found him and warned him to repent of sin, or something worse could happen, that man knew it was Jesus and subsequently informed the Pharisees (5:14-16). There is no evidence that the man repented or put his faith in Jesus.

This incident serves as a reminder that many people want God’s blessings but want nothing to do with Him. Even when faced with the miraculous happening in their lives, it’s not enough for them to repent and follow Jesus. Jesus pointed out to the lame man that he now had a fresh start in life and called for the man repent, so that something worse would not happen. People’s refusal to repent and follow God is why they end up back in the situation that God delivered them from or even worse.

When’s the last time you thanked God for your miracle? What sin is God calling you to repent from or something worse could happen? Is Jesus calling you to repent and give your life to Him today? Will you heed the call?

Bio: Dr. Jerome F. Coleman is lead pastor of the First Baptist Church of Crestmont, Willow Grove, PA, shepherding God’s flock for 16 years. He has been happily married to his wife Kim for 28 years and is currently vice-president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention.