



He Met Jesus... at the Pool of Bethesda John 5

I have always been frustrated by the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. Do you remember the story? While Jesus is in Jerusalem for a Jewish festival, he passes the pool of Bethesda. A Jewish tradition said that when an angel “stirs the water,” the first person into this pool would be healed. This lame man is lying near the pool hoping that the waters will be stirred and he can be healed.

Jesus asks the man, “Do you want to be healed?” The man’s answer annoys me. All he needs to say is, “Yes, sir!” But no, he starts to whine! “I have no one to put me into the pool. Someone else always gets there before me.” Whine, whine, whine!

At this point, I want Jesus to say, “OK, fine. Just lay there and grumble; I’ll heal someone with a more positive attitude.” But Jesus doesn’t seem put off by this man’s complaints. Instead, he simply says, “Get up! Take up your bed and walk.”

To everyone’s amazement, the man takes up his bed and begins to walk. John says, “Now that day was the Sabbath.” When the Jewish leaders see this man, they say, “You can’t be carrying a burden on the Sabbath; it’s against the law!”

The man answers, “The man who healed me said, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” It is as though he is saying, “Don’t blame me! I am just doing what he told me to do. It’s *his* fault!” This answer doesn’t satisfy the Jewish leaders, and they start to huff, “Who said ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” The guy stammers, “I don’t know!”

Later, Jesus finds this man in the Temple and speaks to him. Afterward, the man goes to tell the Jewish leaders, “It was Jesus who healed me.”

I must confess that this has always been my least favorite miracle. I expect people to do their best. I expect them to put forth some effort. All I see in this story is a man who doesn't even try. A whiner - and I don't have much patience with whiners. When I taught Gospels class, I always skimmed across this story, because I didn't like it.

But I am learning that God's greatest work is done not for those who can do it themselves, but for those who have to rely on God entirely. Those who have it all

together but just need a bit of boost from God don't get that much from Him! But those who can do nothing for themselves and have to rely on God for everything get a lot!

I grew up in our American "can-do" culture. My favorite Bible verse was Hezekiah 3:13 - "God helps those who help themselves." Imagine my amazement when I learned that Hezekiah 3:13 is not in the Bible. In fact, the more I read the Gospels, the more I realize that a more accurate message is: "God helps those who can't help themselves."

I've come to appreciate this story much more as I reach places in my life where I can't help myself. I can't solve my problems. I can't fix the situations I face. I find myself whining, "God, I do my best, and it just doesn't work!" Whine, whine, whine!

I've begun to appreciate those times when Jesus comes to someone who cannot help himself and says, "Get up!" A leper says, "If you will, you can make me clean." Years ago, I would have said, "IF?? Who do you think you are talking to? Of course, Jesus can!" But I don't say that anymore, because Jesus himself doesn't say any of that. He just says, "I will! Be clean."

As long as you are strong enough to solve your own problems, John 5 may annoy you. But if you ever reach the place where you can no longer help yourself, you will find this story to be a great encouragement. When you cannot find solutions in your own strength, you can call out to God for help. At that moment, you can cry with the leper, "If you will, you can...." And at that moment, you will find that God is there to do for you what you cannot do for yourself.