

## **052222 "Restored Life" John 5:1-9**

There was a pond near the market selling sheep in the city of Jerusalem. There were five large pillars surrounding the pond, and the name of the pond was "Bethesda". The name here means house of grace. As the name suggests, the sick man, who had been ill for 38 years, experienced the special grace of God in this story.

As stated in verse 1, the day of healing was a Jewish holiday and the Sabbath. We do not know what kind of holiday it was, but we can easily imagine that it was crowded with many people near the market at the festival.

This was when Jesus and his disciples went to the pond in Bethesda in Jerusalem. At that time people believe that sometimes an angel would descend into the pond and stir the water and the first person to enter the water would be cleansed of whatever disease they had. Many people were gathered near the Pond because of this rumor. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

The Lord was just passing by, and saw this man lying there and knew that he had been there a long time. Jesus approached him and said, "Do you want to be made well?" Here, we might want to pay attention to this man's answer. Jesus asked what the sick man wanted straightforwardly. "Do you want to be made well?" But the sick man did not answer he wanted to get better, but that when the water moved, he complained that he had no one to put him into the water first. His only interest was to be the first to enter the pond when the water moves. Please observe, this man speaks of the unkindness of those around him. "I have this problem because I have on one. I have this problem because of them." Maybe he forgot why he wanted to win first place. His

answer was quite interesting!

But, maybe he's not the only one who responds that way. Through today's Bible, Jesus may ask each of us the same question: "Do you want to be made well?" But we may answer, "Lord, I have to succeed. Lord, whatever I do, I have to be number one. Lord, I have to make a lot of money. Lord, I have to educate my children the best possible way. But I have no one to help me..."

The prayer that I heard so much when I was a child, "...become the head and not the tail..." Of course, parents prayed these prayers with the hope that their children would do well. But I thought about this many times. If everyone wants to be the head, then who should be the body and who should be the tail? At one time, there was a corporate advertising campaign that goes as follows: 'We remember Neil Armstrong, who first set foot on the moon, and Jamie Lindberg, who first crossed the Atlantic by plane. But nobody remembers who came second.'

And obviously this company was proud that it was the best in its sector. This kind of advertising really shows how people are obsessed with being the best or no.1. And inside of that, people tend to think that the reason they can't do it is because of them. "Listen Lord, if only I had more sympathetic parents, more manageable kids, if only I got that job I always wanted, if only I hadn't had to settle for that second-tier college, if only I got that promotion, if only my spouse would take a fair share of the responsibilities. Come to think of it.

Beloved, the Gospel of John talks about eternal life a lot more than the other Gospels. When you hear the word eternal life, you might think it means life after death, but the Gospel of John says it a little differently. Eternal life Jesus is talking about is what the faithful life looks like right now. Eternal life is that

daily life that is touched by God's eternity in your life here and now that at the same time manifests all the beauty and hope and astonishing love of God's own glory. God promises real life, whole life, rich life, fulfilling life right here right now. Eternal life, an important theme in the Gospel of John, is connected with the conclusion of today's story.

Jesus said to him, "Stand up! Take your mat and walk." If you had been sick for 38 years, what more could you wish for? But when you read the words of the Gospel carefully, Jesus did not just say "get up", but "take your mat and walk". The mat is called [Clavatos] in a Greek word, but in English it is translated just as mat. As we imagine today, it is not a proper mat purchased from Home Depot or Target. What would the mat of the sick man look like for 38 years? I have no doubt it was dirty, filthy, and even disgusting. But Jesus did not just heal his illness. Jesus is telling him to stand up with his problem, or traces of his problem, and walk.

Once I saw a sign like this: "Your mother is not here. Please clean your own mess." Jesus didn't just tell him to clean his own mess but Jesus was telling him to stand up without blaming others or the environment. Indeed, as the Lord had said, he got up and took his mat and walked. Jesus wanted his life being restored.

This verse is very important! People usually just want to solve their own problems. Health problems, economic problems, children's problems, workplace problems ... However, I have seen many who fall far from God once the problem is solved. This teaches us that what the Lord wants is not just a solution to the problem, but a restored overall life. The Lord wants people who had taken it for granted to get up and take their own problems, and to help, serve, and live.

In the Gospel, on one occasion the disciples were debating about "Who is the greatest among us?" While Jesus talks about the crucifixion and death, His disciples were arguing about who among them was the greatest. At that time, Jesus taught that those who are like little children are the greatest, and that the smallest and humblest of all is the greatest. And he said, you guys should serve each other.

God does not want us all to be the first. There is always only one first place. Does God only love one person? I don't think so. Being first or success in worldly standards is our human wish, not God's wish. God's wish for us is not to live according to such worldly values, but to live a life of servants according to the Bible.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, now rather than being number one, we want to live with God as number one in our lives. Let us put God first. And be grateful for our life today! In this life, no matter what the world thinks of you, you will always live a victorious life in Christ. "Do you want to be made well?" "Stand up, take your mat and walk." Such a life does not fall, and it is steady until the end. 3 John 1:2 says, "Beloved, I pray that you will be good in all things and be strong, as your soul does well." Remember, God promises real life, whole life, rich life, fulfilling life right here right now. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.