

**The Word Became Flesh**  
**Week 12**  
**John 5:1-16**  
**“Not Everyone Gets It”**

**Introduction**

**...There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one.** **Romans 3:10-12**

The **Fifth Chapter of John** begins by saying... **“After this..”**, John is referring to the events of the previous chapter that tells the story of the healing of the nobleman’s son in Cana. Following the second sign miracle in John’s eyewitness account of Jesus in chapter four, John then immediately takes us back to the city of Jerusalem to bear witness to the third sign miracle. It is important to note that Jesus performed many great signs between these two events. You can find several of them recorded in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But under the guiding hand of The Holy Spirit, John has chosen his set of specific events in the three years of Christ’s earthly ministry to convince his readers that Jesus is indeed The Son of God (**John 20:31**). He goes on to say at the end of his writings that there were **“many other things that Jesus did”** that were not included in this gospel (**John 21:25**).

It is important to know all of this, because by the time that Jesus returned to Jerusalem, He had developed quite a following. Some of those followers were true believers, who would endure to the end. But some were simply enthralled by the signs and wonders that Jesus did. They followed Him much like people today will follow after a rock star or famous actor. But usually, this type of “fan” will eventually lose interest and move on to the next shiny object that comes along. Jesus, unlike anyone else who ever walked this earth, could see into the heart of every man (**John 2:24-25**). And therefore, He knew full well whose faith was genuine, and whose was not. Not everyone who had an encounter with Jesus became a follower of Jesus. In the **Fifth Chapter of John**, we meet a man who was healed, and yet, for whatever reason, did not exhibit the fruits of a true believer.

The narrative begins as Jesus is returning to the city of Jerusalem for one of the three appointed feasts, which were required for all Jewish men to attend, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. We are not told which of the feasts it was, but it isn’t important or the Holy Spirit would have inspired John to tell us. However, the route that Jesus took into the city is important. He entered by “The Sheep Gate”, an entrance that was to the Northeast of the city.

The Sheep Gate was constructed in the days of Nehemiah. As Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he assigned different tasks to each of his workers. The Sheep Gate entryway was built by a Jewish High Priest named Elishabib (**Nehemiah 3:1**). It was meant to be used as the route by which all sacrificial lambs were brought into the Temple to be sacrificed. It is fitting that Christ chose this route to enter the city, for He was **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** (**John 1:29**). It is also significant that this “way in” to the temple of God was constructed by a high priest. For Jesus, our High Priest, has made the way for us to enter into the very presence of God’s holy place.

Just outside the Sheep Gate there was a portico (canopy supported by stone columns) that covered two pools of water. These pools were used to wash the lambs before bringing them into the temple. And over the centuries, they were also used as places for cleansing baths, known as “*Mikvahs*”, where sojourners would wash themselves before going to the temple. By the time of Christ, a Jewish belief had arisen that an angel would come at certain times to touch the waters causing them to bubble up. It was believed by many that the first one who entered the water after the angel had stirred it would receive healing from whatever infirmities that afflicted them. It is this belief that gives us insight into the third sign miracle of John’s gospel.

The man that Jesus meets at the pool of Bethesda is a most interesting study. He, of all people, should have become a follower of Christ after what Jesus did for him. But sadly, not all will believe in the Son of God. The evidence may be overwhelming, but many still choose not to believe. It is a grim reminder of the evil that resides within the human heart. Today’s message is one of a man who was *Unqualified, Ungrateful, and Unrepentant*. It is the story of a man who was physically healed, but still not whole.

**Unqualified (vs. 2-9a)**

**By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Aramaic, which has five colonnades. Within these lay a large number of the disabled — blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and realized that he had already been there a long time. He said to him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.” “Get up.” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk.” Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.**

**John 5:2-9a**

There is an awful lot to unpack here. As stated previously, it was widely believed that an angel would come down and disturb the waters of these pools and give them healing power. But the healing could only be received by those who entered the water first. This belief is actually included in some of the later manuscripts of John’s gospel, but is not included in the older and more accurate ones. This is why a fourth verse describing this phenomenon is included in the KJV, but excluded from later translations. It was possibly added by a scribe, who wished to clarify the lame man’s reasoning for waiting by the pool in the first place.

Now thirty-eight years is a very long time to wait for healing. We cannot know whether or not the man had come there every day, or only on the special feast days. What we can be certain of, is that someone had to bring him there, for he was unable to even get himself into the water on his own. But He was there day after day, year after year, just hoping for a miracle. One has to be impressed with his determination to say the very least. When Jesus singled him out of the crowd that day, the man more than likely saw Him as an annoyance rather than a source of healing. After all, Jesus’ question to him did seem to be a study in the obvious. He must have thought to himself, “What do you mean, do I want to get well? Of course I want to get well! Why do you think I’ve been lying beside this pool for all these years?!” But Jesus isn’t just interested in our physical healing. He longs to bring healing to our souls as well. And that requires a saving faith in The Son of God Himself.

It is important to mention here that of all the multitude of people in that colonnade that day, Jesus only chose one to heal. The sovereignty of God is not something to be ignored. God does whatever He deems fitting for Him to do. The TV preachers who go around saying that we can get God to do whatever we want if we simply have enough faith, should take a closer look at this narrative. I’m quite certain that many, if not all, of those people who surrounded the pool of Bethesda that day had some degree of faith, or they would not have been there in the first place. But as we can see, not all of them received their healing. Jesus sovereignly chose only one.

A second thing to notice is that it was not this man’s faith that healed him! At best he thought that he “might” be able to persuade this stranger who was speaking to him to help him to get into the pool in the event the waters began to stir. Perhaps he had even hoped that He would wait there with him for a time just in case. He had no idea who this stranger was, and he certainly had no faith-filled expectations that this man could heal His infirmity. He wasn’t healed by his faith. He was immediately healed when Jesus spoke the word that he be restored!

And finally, we see this man’s infirmity did not allow him to enter the healing waters by himself. This is a perfect picture of man’s inability to find salvation based upon his own merits. We, like this man, are paralyzed to revive the healing that we so desperately need in and of ourselves. This is why we need a Savior. We will never be able to receive the living water of salvation, unless The Savior finds us, and brings us His healing. The paralyzed man, in this regard, is every one of us. We are so pitiful and wretched that all is hopeless. That is until Jesus comes along.

Jesus was there that day by divine appointment. He knew before He ever left His home region of Galilee that He would be meeting a cripple by the pool of Bethesda. Just as He knew that He would meet a woman at the well in Samaria, and the steward of Herod in Cana. Nothing takes Jesus by surprise. And at Bethesda, He would heal a lame man of His own choosing, but He also knew that same man would ultimately reject the spiritual healing that was necessary to save his soul. The man was not qualified in any way for the gift that Jesus would offer him, but Jesus offered it anyway. For God so loved... The World.

**Ungrateful (vs. 9b-13)**

**Now that day was the Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The Law prohibits you from picking up your mat." He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick up your mat and walk?'" they asked. But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.** **John 5:9b-13**

The Sabbath. Have you ever met someone who was so caught up in religion that they didn't seem to have an ounce of God's love in them? Of course you have. God gave man the Sabbath as a gift, not a burden. He wanted us to rest and spend time in prayer, drawing close to Him. But instead, the religious leaders of Israel had turned this into a burden and a curse, coming up with endless lists of things that a person could, and could not, do on this holy day. Transgression against these man-made rules were considered to be criminal in nature. And many feared the wrath of the Pharisees as much or more than they feared the wrath of God Himself. Jesus speaks of the Sabbath in its proper context in the gospel of Mark.

**Then He told them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."** **Mark 2:27**

Make no mistake, Christ purposely chose the Sabbath day to heal this lame man, because He knew full well what would happen when He did. Those religious leaders would absolutely lose it! For they believed that their rules superseded everything else. Jesus was about to bring their whole wretched system down upon their heads, and they would never get over it. For not only did these wicked men believe that by adding to The Word of God, it would make God love them all the more, they also were convinced that the promised Messiah could only come, if these rules were obeyed to the letter. It was like the infamous "Tower of Babel" all over again; Men, trying to build themselves up to God. And in their futile attempts to do just that, they had altogether missed the truth that God... had already come down to them!

When the Jewish leaders confronted the man as to why he had broken their most sacred rules regarding the Sabbath, he hurriedly shifts the blame to someone else for fear of incurring their wrath. "It wasn't my fault. It was them man who healed me," he says. Talk about ungrateful! He was paralyzed for thirty-eight years, and then miraculously healed by the loving kindness of a stranger. And yet how quickly he is willing to throw this same man, the One Who had given him back his very life, under the bus! It is somewhat reminiscent of the betrayal of Judas Iscariot that was to come later.

In order to appease these self-righteous Pharisees, this thankless man was in essence saying, "Don't blame me, blame Him!" And that is exactly what the Pharisees would do. But there was one slight problem. The man had no idea Who Jesus was! Just as quickly as He had appeared to display His mighty and wondrous power, He had disappeared into the crowd. Every bit of this was intentional, by the way. God, as always, had a plan. The fuse for the murderous rage of the Pharisees was lit upon this day at the Sheep Gate. And in the end, it would detonate upon Calvary's Cross. Behold The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

**Unrepentant (vs. 14-16)**

**After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus Who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.** **John 5:14-16**

Unlike, the other encounters that John shares with us, Jesus never mentions “believing” or “faith” to this man. He simply does not reveal Himself to the man in this way. He just heals him and disappears without introducing himself at all. He confronts him later in the temple and gives him a stern warning, “Stop sinning or something worse will happen to you.” Now what could be worse than being paralyzed for thirty-eight years? The answer is, of course, an eternity in hell.

Some have argued that Jesus is telling the man that it was because of his sins that he was paralyzed in the first place. I do not necessarily believe this to be the case. What I do believe is that this man’s sin of unbelief was standing in the way of his salvation. Failure to believe in The Son of God is the most horrific sin of them all. This man had obviously not placed his faith in Jesus, even after he had experienced his miraculous healing. How do we know this? Because immediately upon finding out who Jesus was, rather than offer Him praise and thanksgiving for his healing, he reported Him to the Pharisees! Talk about mixed up priorities. He chose to be in good standing with the religious leaders of Israel, rather than to be in good standing with Israel’s God. What a tragedy it is when people choose to appease men, rather than God.

**“Don’t fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”** **Matthew 10:28**

Obviously Christ’s warning about the man’s need of repentance went unheeded. After all, if he had truly believed in The Son of God, then he would have followed him then and there, rather than running off to betray Jesus to those who were out to get Him. Many people have read this story and made the assumption that this poor man was saved when he was healed physically, but that is not the case. Not only did he not know who Jesus was when it happened, but even when he did, he was unrepentant, turning Him over to those who wished Him dead. The obvious question being, how could such a thing ever possibly happen, after Jesus had done so much for this poor hopeless creature?

The answer is much the same for many today. Jesus, The Lamb of God, lay down His life upon a cross to provide for them the healing that they so desperately need. After this death, He miraculously rose from the dead to prove exactly Who He is, The Son of God. And yet, after doing all this for the lost and dying, many still refuse to believe in Him, choosing to continue in their sins, rather than accept the gift that God has so graciously provided. In spite of all that Christ has done, many are unrepentant and unforgiven, and the wrath of God remains upon them (**John 3:36**). They, like this man, may have experienced great physical blessings, such as health, prosperity, and success in this life. But those things are of little value compared to eternity.

**... “If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?”** **Mark 8:34b-36**

Yes, the miracle of **John Chapter 5** had allowed this man to walk again. But what good would that do if he did not repent of his sins and follow after The Son of God? He was far too concerned with what others would think, and he had missed what really mattered. We do not know if this man ever came to his senses and surrendered his life to the One Who had healed him. We can only hope at this point that he did. For physical healing, apart from true spiritual healing, will not enable anyone to stand before the throne of God. Surrender your all to Christ today. Repent of you sin, and believe in Him, and not just find healing... but be made WHOLE.

And let all those who are trusting in The Healer say... **TRUTH!!!**