

The Miracle of Rejection

(John 5:1-16)

(preached 8/19/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

Many of you are probably shocked or amused by my passion over false religion.

And the reason for that is that the culture around us has been successful at blurring the lines of truth and error..

We live in age where no one is completely right and no one is completely wrong about anything..

Now, we should all understand that there are plenty of areas in life where that is true..

It is not right to love the color blue and wrong to love the color green.

It is not right to love beef and wrong to love fish..

It is not right to pull for Clemson and wrong to pull for the Gamecocks..

How did that get in my notes?

I will edit that out next time..

But seriously, there are areas of life where there is room for disagreement, but the choice of religion is not one of them..

Yet, the culture and world around us tries to convince of that over and over..

The most frequent example of that are the COEXIST bumper stickers that you see on cars quite often..

The point of the sticker is that all religions should be allowed to coexist...

Yet, that is an impossibility since each of those religions oppose the truths of the others...

And furthermore, if they are all equal, then they are all worthless anyway...

So blood runs to my face and my pupils dilate when addressing the issue of false religion...

And the reason is simple..

False religion is not a live and let live proposition..

False religion is damning..

False religion seeks to lead you away from the one true God, from the one true gospel, and not only lead you away now but lead to hell forever..

That is the power of false religion..

It blinds people and then destroys people.

False religions are the creation of Satan.

False religions are the playground of demons..

And false religions hold captive people who need to be set free..

So my righteous anger boils at Mormonism, at Islam, at Jehovah's Witnesses, at the Roman Catholic church, at any false religious system..

Even the false religion of the south that teaches the way to heaven is by being a good man or good woman..

And the reason these false religion fires me up is really two fold..

#1 - It enslaves people and makes them prisoners to its system..

And #2 - It attacks true religion and seeks to destroy those who believe and teach the truth.

And there may be no greater example of these two threats of false religion than what we see here in John 5:1-16...

What we read today in these verses is a very familiar event to anyone who has been in the church...

It is often called the Lame Man at the Bethesda Pool, and it is often easy to get lost in the incredible miracle that we will see..

But remember, the point of these verses is to convince the reader that Jesus is the Son of God..

And the second thing we need to take note of is that the Jewish religious along with all other false religious leaders are sons of their father, the devil..

Let's simply let this scene unfold for us a verse at a time following this outline..

I. The Compassionate Beginning (1-9)

II. The Predictable Plot (10-13)

III. The Tragic Ending (14-16)

Let's begin by reading verses 1-5 of John 5..

I. The Compassionate Beginning (1-9)

1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in [a]Hebrew [b]Bethesda, having five porticoes. 3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [[c]waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] 5 A man was there who had been [d]ill for thirty-eight years.

The first thing you may notice about these verses is that many of you may be wondering where did part of verse 3 and all of verse 4 come from?

If you have ESV or a NIV or other translations, your verse 4 is probably in the footnotes..

In the NASB that I use, verse 4 is simply in brackets..

No need to worry.

This is not a major issue..

It seems that verse 4 was an addition by a scribe that wasn't in the original..

There are 3 or 4 other place this occurs in the NT, but none of them are major issues that affect anything about gospel or salvation..

In this case, the addition of verse 4 was probably added to help people understand why unhealthy people hung around pools of water..

There is no evidence that an angel of the Lord stirred up anything in those pools...

It was simply superstition of the people in that culture, much like we have superstitions today...

God is not a God of superstition or magic.

God doesn't need magic to heal anyone..

God simply can heal on command, which we will see in a minute..

The original text would simply be verse 3..

3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, 5 A man was there who had been [d]ill for thirty-eight years.

Now, we also note as we look at our map that Jesus is back down south in this scene.

Last week, he was in Galilee as he healed the royal official's son..

But now, he is back down south in Jerusalem, and the reason for that is simple...

There was a feast..

All Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem for 3 annual feasts..

One was Passover in April, One was Pentecost in May or June, and the third was the feast of Tabernacles in October..

We simply don't know which feast it was, but we do know that Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Law so he was there..

Since he spent much of his time in the north in Galilee, the most likely scenario is that he travelled down to Jerusalem and then travelled back home to Galilee..

So Jesus is in Jerusalem and he is passing by the pools of Bethesda...

Bethesda means house of mercy, and people hung by the pools in hopes of finding God's mercy through the healing of their various diseases..

The sick, the blind, the lame, the withered were all there..

Here is a picture of the of what could be the ruins of that area today..

It is located in the Muslim section of Jerusalem today but you can see the big columns that held up the roof of the 5 porticoes that were there..

These porticoes were structures that providing shade to the sick people that hung out there...

And we note one person in particular who was there that day...

He was a lame man who had been there for 38 years..

So Jesus is in Jerusalem and he passes by the pools and we pick up the scene in verse 6..

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He *said to him, “Do you wish to get well?”

This is the picture of compassion...

First of all, no one went to those pools but the sick or the crippled or the leper..

There was always the fear of getting sick that kept people away, but the attitude of most Jews is that sick people were under God's judgment..

In the Jews eyes, these people were not only unclean but they they were also under God's curse..

As a result, no one went there, especially a religious leader of rabbi..

But Jesus is filled with compassion, and he stops by the pool while in town..

He goes up tho this man who has been there for almost 4 decades and asks him if he wants to get better..

Verse 7..

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus *said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." 9 Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

Once again, we see the compassionate Christ become the all powerful Christ as this man is immediately healed..

And notice, it is also instantaneous healing..

Verse 9 doesn't say that the man struggled to his feet and stood there with shaky knees...

No, Jesus simply heals immediately and completely and the man rises, grabs his pallet and walks..

Couple things to take note of..

#1 - This is not an issue of faith.

From what we can tell, this man has no clue about the identity of Jesus..

He isn't a believer..

Jesus never asks him to believe before he performs the miracle.

Jesus just ask if he wants to get better, and then unleashes his power to heal..

That is it...

No conversation..

No small talk..

No confrontation.

A question, an answer, and a full and complete healing.

This is simply an act of compassion because that is who God is..

God is a God of compassion..

The world is fallen.

People are fallen. and because of that, diseases and sicknesses are present and people suffer..

Yet God is full of mercy and Christ here is simply a demonstration of God's unmatched compassion and mercy..

He can't help but heal this man because that is who Jesus is..

It overflows his life..

But a second thing to note here is this..

#2 - This healing occurred on the Sabbath..

It was a Saturday when this man got better after 38 years of suffering..

And the reason that is important is because the Sabbath was the centerpiece of the Jews false religious system...

You see Judaism was corrupt because it replaced belief in God with working your way to God..

And there was no greater example of the need to please God with your works than Sabbath day laws...

In short, the Sabbath was made for man.

It was simply designed by God a day of rest and remembrance.

God wanted his people to remember every week that he created the world in 6 days..

So he instituted the Sabbath as a day to cease from normal work and remember His power and grace on the 7th day of each week..

From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, people were to have a day that different than the others...

They weren't to do their normal work.

They were simply called to use those 24 hours to rest and remember the Lord of creation...

Yet, the Jews had kidnapped and corrupted the Sabbath day over the years..

They had turned Saturdays into a prison for people..

They had made it a violation of the Sabbath to do just about anything..

You couldnt light a candle because it was work to blow it out..

You couldn't look in a mirror because you might see a gray hair and pull it out..

You couldnt take a bath because water might spill on the floor and clean it and that would be work..

You laugh at that but Orthodox Jews still live by Sabbath laws today..

In Orthodox Jewish homes, some of them hire light switch flippers to turn lights on and off on Saturdays since it is considered work to flip a switch..

Simply put, the Jews took a day designed to bless man and turned it into a day that cursed man..

Jews had to work harder at not working on Saturday than they had to actually work the other 6 days..

The Sabbath was and still is the centerpiece of their false religious system.

It was no longer a religion of the true God, it was religion of man and his accomplishments..

It was a religion designed to make some look real goodwill making others look real bad...

This is what false religion does...

It elevates the leaders and takes advantage of those it supposedly leads..

And it angered Jesus..

And he was going to abolish the whole system eventually, but now he is simply aiming his arrow at the center of the bullseye here..

So he tosses a rock in the pig pen, and the one that squeals is the one he hits...

So let's listen to the squealing pigs in verses 10-13...

WE can call this..

II. The Predictable Plot (10-13)

So the man is healed..

He is up, he is walking, but none of that miracle is noticed by the Jews...

Instead, they only notice what day it is...

Verse 10...

10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." 11 But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'" 12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?" 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.

It is just false religion to see a miracle but instead of rejoicing, they complain..

Some people in life are born complainers..

You give them an apple and they want an orange..

You bless them and they see it as a curse..

I would remind us all that complaining puts us in the company of Israel that wandered 40 years in the wilderness and in the company of the Jews who complained about Jesus from beginning to end..

Complaining usually reveals a person's true character, and there is no doubt that the Jews of verse 10 weren't interested in the miracle that took place...

They were only interested in who broke their laws...

This is the sadness of false religion...

It misses God because it can't see past its own nose....

Yet, this is the predictable response of religious people..

They care more about their rules and their religion than they do a relationship with the Lord..

Here is God in the flesh in their midst doing miracles never seen before, and all they can think about is what day it is...

The Sabbath day was to point to the God of creation, and now God in the flesh has just created new legs for a man, but all they care about are rules violations...

Now, the question is this....

Did Jesus know it was the Sabbath day?

Sure he did.

Did he know that it would generate this response from the Jews?

Sure he did.

In fact, the miracle was an act of compassion but the point of including the story of it is to highlight the coming conformation between Jesus and the religious leaders..

You see, false religion must go if true religion is to be embraced.

The religion that says you must earn your way to heaven must be replaced by a religion of faith alone in Christ alone..

And though it isn't quite time for Jesus to be arrested by the religious leaders, the beginning of that desire to kill Jesus begins to stir here and it will reach boiling point real soon...

So the leaders accuse the man of sin...

They they seek out the one who performed the miracle..

Jesus and slipped away but the story isn't quite over...

Let's finish up in verses 14-16 with...

III. The Tragic Ending (14-16)

Verse 14..

14 Afterward Jesus *found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”

Though Jesus left the man to avoid a premature confrontation with the Jews, he was not done with the man..

He finds him in the temple and call him to obedience and holiness so that he remains healthy..

Now that raises a question in our minds...

Is disease and sickness a result of sin?

And the answer is yes and no and I don't know..

Yes, disease is a result of sin because the sin of Adam and Eve brought death, disease, and all sorts of problems into the world..

The answer is also yes because there are times in the Bible when sin led people to get sick and die..

The answer is also no because there people in the Bible like the blind man in John 9 who was blind through no sin of his own or his parents..

And the answer is also I don't know because often times, we dont know if people get sick due to sin or not..

In this case, it is clear.

The man's lameness was a result of sin...

That is why Jesus tells him to stop sinning or else he may get something worse than 38 years of lameness..

Now what is worse than 38 years of lameness?

How about an eternity in hell if he doesn't repent..

So this is an evangelistic second meeting..

Look, I healed you physically.

Now, you need to repent and believe so that you can be healed spiritually..

This is a second act of compassion on the part of Christ...

He didn't heal the physical and ignore the spiritual?

No Jesus found him a second time, and the question is the same?

Do you want to get better?

Well, repent or something worse is coming..

I will tell you this morning...

God may have spared you physically to bring here today and now God is reminding you that you may be physically better but unless you turn from your sin, you are going to get physically and spiritually worse forever..

Today is the day to repent and trust fully in Christ..

He has found you and confronted you, but what will you do?

Let's see what this man did..

Verse 15..

15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Surprisingly and sadly, this man picked the wrong side..

Instead of trusting in the one who had healed him, he trusting in the people who had ignored him..

Instead of believing in Christ, he remained in the unbelief of Judaism..

Instead of the true religion of repentance and faith in Christ, he chose the false religion of human achievement and good works..

The crippled man was now walking back to a religious system, but he would never walk the streets of gold..

This is the power of false religion..

This man sided with the leaders who scolded him, and rejected the One who showed him grace.

I can't imagine the sadness of seeing Christ face to face and experiencing his power but staying in my sin and false religion..

But guess what?

1000s of people do it each week..

You see them come to church...

Look at Jesus in the Scriptures..

Take note of his power and compassion but they walk out, head back to their sin, and hope to make it in because their good works outweigh their bad...

This is the first danger of false religion...

It binds while it blinds those in it..

The second danger of false religion is verse 16..

16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

This is the beginning of the end for Christ on earth..

He has now hit at the heart of the false religion of the Jews and they will not be satisfied until he is dead.

That is what false religion does..

It isn't content until it has suffocated and snuffed out the truth...

Let me tell you something ..

Your Mormon neighbors, your Jehoavah Witness neighbors, your Catholic neighbors, you Muslim neighbors are not simply polite but misguided people.

They are part of religious systems that are fueled by Satan and his forces to destroy Biblical Christianity..

This is the mission of false religion...

Destroy true religion and all those who believe in salvation by faith alone in Christ alone...

The Jews will eventually and temporarily be successful in doing that with Jesus, but I assure you...

Jesus will have the last word..

Conclusion

So where does that leave us?

#1 - Our God is the God of compassion.

Christ went to Samaria and asked for water and evangelized a woman..

Christ went to the pool at Bethesda and healed a man and shared the gospel with him..

Christ looked for ways to impact people lives with the gospel and he often began with acts of compassion..

May God make us all compassionate people..

May we engage adulterers and the sick and the lost in hopes of drawing them to the gospel..

#2 - Our God is the God of the Sabbath.

It is so easy to let our rules become law for everyone else.

Our family has standards of behavior, but we are careful not to let them become everyone else's standards.

Some people make their way the highway for everyone else.

The Jews did that with the Sabbath..

They took the law of God and developed it into the laws of man..

Let me be clear.

There are truths in the Bible that are non-negotiable.

They are sure.

They are right.

They are unchangeable.

But there are also things that we must exercise wisdom and extend grace about...

#3 - Our God is the God of miracles.

Once again, the deity of Christ is on display..

Consider all the ways that Jesus displayed his deity in this passage..

He knew a man had been sick for 38 years.

He healed that man on the spot with a few words.

He disappeared without anyone noticing.

He found a man among thousands in the temple.

This is the Son of God.

This is the Christ.

And belief in that will lead you to eternal life.

Tragically, the man by the pool didn't believe in Him..

But what will you do?

Will you hold on to your sin though Jesus warns you to let it go?

Will you choose to stay with your own false religion of good works and being better than your neighbor?

The words of Christ are true today..

Repent of your sin and sin no more in order that nothing worse may happen to you...

Let us pray...

