

WAITING FOR THE BLESSING

John 5:1-16

A feast of the Jews was about to be held in Jerusalem. As was His custom, our Lord went up to the city for that event. He knew that the occasion would afford Him numerous opportunities for doing much good to many of those in attendance. This interesting and refreshing story of what He did while there will live forever.

I. The Pool.

There was in Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which in the Hebrew language was called Bethesda, meaning "the house of mercy." When the waters of this pool bubbled up intermittently they were reputed to contain elements of a medicinal and curative nature. The people attributed the agitation of the water at various intervals to the coming of an angel.

It was peculiar to this pool that the flow of water came and went. Suddenly, it would bubble up, remain for a moment, and then die away. The impression was widespread that the healing virtues of the disturbed waters were applicable only to the one who succeeded in getting down into the pool first after the troubling of the water.

II. The Patients.

Around this pool five porches had been erected for the comfort of those who were waiting for a cure. The roofs of these porches protected the sick folk from the rays of the sun and from the rain while they were awaiting the moving of the waters. Because of the far-famed virtue of the waters in this pool, people resorted thither from various places.

Along these five porches lay a multitude of sick and afflicted people. All of them needed healing, but they were not all equally sick. In that motley gathering were the blind, weak, feeble, debilitated, lame and withered. All of these afflicted people were anxious to get rid of their maladies. Among them there were as many broken hearts as there were diseased bodies. From far and near they had come in the hope of getting cured or healed.

What a pitiable sight those porches must have presented, crowded with people who were waiting, straining their eyes, watching the still waters of the pool with frenzied anxiety that when the waters began to move some friend would assist them down into them! Every time those waters were disturbed, or bubbled and rose, a flash of hope passed over those impotent people. Each one felt that it was another chance for him. Instantly each one tried to get down into the waters before they subsided again, but somebody stepped in ahead of them.

Among those who thronged the porches, which had been erected by hands of love for the protection of those who were awaiting a periodical disturbance of the waters, was a man who had been afflicted for thirty-eight years. For half a lifetime he had waited for something to happen which had never taken place. Thirty-eight years is a long time in any man's life. It is a long time for one whose hands are busy with great and thrilling tasks. Of course, it is much longer for one who is helpless. This man had waited and hoped that when the waters moved he might be the first to reach them, but again and again he had been disappointed. Someone else was always first when the waters were disturbed. It was a picture of life framed on the principle of the survival of the fittest, or every man for himself, which is the law of nature under sin.

This poor man lay within sight of the marvelous pool, suffering a double martyrdom--

that of being incapable of reaching it, and also of seeing others, less needy, snatch the boon before his very eyes. To him life had no enjoyment. Wearisome days, months and years were appointed to him. He had waited so long in vain that hope was well-nigh dead within him. And his oft-repeated disappointments had dulled and hardened him. There was a tinge of bitterness in his broken hopes. He was almost in the grip of despair.

Various things about this particular patient are interesting. He was sick and knew it. He was helpless. He was poor and could not hire anyone to help him. He was friendless. He was greatly disappointed in not being healed, but he kept on trying, even though he had failed repeatedly.

III. The Physician.

One Sabbath day Christ visited Bethesda. He always goes to the place where hearts are breaking. He was there because of the misery and need, for He is ever the incarnation of mercy. He was found where He was needed most, and where He might accomplish the most good; not in places of luxury, but in the haunts of misery. It was His purpose to alleviate the various diseases and suffering of the people. He went to the place where the sick lay in order to bless them.

The Great Physician walked among the sick and afflicted unrecognized, unsought and unwelcomed. Passing through the crowd, He singled out one man, went up to him, and asked him a specific question. He said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Are you willing to be made whole?" "Would you like to get well?" "Do you really want to be well and strong?"

Christ knew that He had little chance of helping the man unless he faced the fact that he was sick and in need of a cure. The Lord's question made him face his actual condition, admit his desire, and make an open statement about his helplessness and hopelessness. Willingness to be cured is essential to recovery. Christ does not choose to help people against their wills. He will not make a man whole against his will. Christ comes to us with satisfaction for every hunger of our deepest being; with pardon for our sin, with certitude for our doubt, with comfort for our sorrow, and with peace for all the restless cravings of our souls.

By His question, "Do you really want to be well and strong?", Christ must have been seeking to quicken faith and hope in his heart. He must have been encouraging the man with the assurance that things he had always thought to be impossible were possible by the help of God. He seemed to say, "Don't think about your impotence, but center your thoughts on God's power." He called him to make a great venture of faith, to do something which he had long considered an absolute impossibility. The Physician's prescription was in the form of a command. He said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."

You might say that such an action was an utter impossibility. But, you must remember that Christ's commandments are enablements. When He says, "Do this!" He pledges Himself to give you the power to do it. As you venture on faith, at the command of Christ, to do something that you had considered impossible, the necessary strength always comes to you. Obedience to Christ always brings the power that is needed.

This man's cure was immediate, mysterious, instantaneous, complete, perfect and permanent. Our blessed Lord always does a lasting work. Whatever He does is permanent. It never has to be done over.

This interesting story is a parable of man's spiritual state. All men have the malady of sin. No man can cure himself. No set of men can cure you. Christ alone can do

that. He is accessible to all. He does not make any charges for His services. He has never failed with a single patient. But, He will never force a cure upon you. You must be willing for Him to cure you. All that now stands between you and a perfect soul cure is your own unwillingness.

"It is just like Him, to take our sins away,
It is just like Him, to keep us day by day,
It is just like Jesus, all along the way,
It is just like His great love."

But to experience spiritual healing, you must come to Jesus and trust Him entirely to cure you. Just as your beloved doctor says to you, "Well, old boy, you are in a pretty bad shape. You need an operation. Will you risk me?" And you answer, "I will." So, Jesus says, "You are a poor lost sinner. Will you let Me be your Saviour?" Say, "I will, Lord Jesus, I will." If you will do so, you will have your sins forgiven and blotted out, and you will become God's child.

If you want the cure, now is the time. Today is the day of salvation. Jesus is ready and willing and able to make you whole now. Are you ready and willing? Let Him cleanse you and save you from sin, and give you a pure heart, a good conscience, and a clean mind. Let Him make you whole.