

Sunday 26th February 2023 Family Service John 5:1-18

Well, in our reading today, there was a man who wanted to get ready for a visit to the pool, but this was a special pool...the man in the story from John was lame. He couldn't walk, and he hadn't been able to walk for 38 years. Thirty-eight years! That's a pretty long time to sit by a pool.

Now, the pool was called Bethesda. It was near the temple, so people had ideas that it was Holy or special. In fact, there was a superstitious legend that every now and then an angel would come and stir up the water in the pool. The legend said that the first person to get in the water after that stirring would be healed. So lots of people who were sick or blind or lame would sit by that pool, day after day, just hoping they'd be the lucky one to make it into the water first if they saw the special whirlpool action.

Well, this lame man had been waiting there too, but he didn't feel very hopeful. Since he couldn't walk, he couldn't get to the pool first. And even if he did make it there, he should certainly hope that water was truly miraculous, or he'd be in a bit of trouble....

Anyway, Jesus came by and spotted this man. For whatever reason He singled the lame man out from the crowd, and asked if he wanted to be healed. Well, that seems an obvious answer. Of course he wanted to be healed, why else would he be next to the pool?

He explained the situation, but he didn't realize who it was he was speaking with. So Jesus gave him some simple directions. He just told him to pick up his bed and walk.

Immediately, the man was healed! It didn't take special stirring of the water. It didn't take another thirty-eight years. It was just a word from Jesus and an action of obedience, and the man was healed!

Sometimes we come close to missing the true power of who Jesus really is. We don't realise that he is able to bring healing. Maybe we try to put our hope in other things...if we just say the right words, or go to the right places, maybe that will work out well for us. Maybe we pay attention to superstitions, or good luck charms.

What superstitious things or good luck charms do people put their trust in?

- Crossing your fingers
- Horoscopes
- Lucky charm – horseshoe
- Same numbers in the lottery
- Some TV evangelists try to get you buying certain things that they say will bring your healing, like a napkin.

Some people think that if they get items from the Holy Land or near the Sea of Galilee that it will bring them closer to God.

Well, if we focus too much on those *things*, we can miss out on the author of hope and healing, God Himself. Jesus is the only One in whom we can truly place our trust in. In fact he said this “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me”. In other words not anyone or anything will get us closer to God, except than us having a relationship with Jesus and trusting him.

The lame man didn't initially recognize Jesus as the Messiah who had healed him. Similarly for us, when we recognize that our hope is in Christ alone, we know that only He has power in our lives.

This doesn't always mean that miracles will happen. We might still experience pain or difficulty. But we trust that God knows what He is doing.

Now the story goes on to say that the Jewish leaders were angry because they saw the man carrying his mat back home after being healed. You see the law would not permit you to do any type of work on a Sabbath, and so carrying a mat was considered as work. When they found out that Jesus was healing and leading people on the Sabbath they were not only angry but they began to plan to get rid of him. You see these people were so stuck to their laws, they didn't understand that Jesus was doing the work of God, even though it was a Sabbath day. And on top of that, they were angry because he was claiming that he was equal to God. They just didn't understand all this.

You see God's mission by sending his son Jesus to this world was absolutely clear, but it was totally misunderstood by people around him. They were expecting God to come as a warrior who would defeat the Roman occupation and become their new King. They thought it was all about them following a set of steps, or following superstitions in order to see God at work.

All of the people needed to change their understanding of what God was doing. His mission didn't always make sense to those watching from the outside - then or now – but his life and his death show us that he has things under control.

So what about you? Are you totally misunderstanding Jesus today? Maybe you have an image of God that isn't actually helpful. Do you think that if you simply follow a set of rules or instructions, that will make things ok? Are you willing to accept that Jesus wants you to simply come to him today. Maybe today you can hear him ask that question for the first time, “Do you want to get well?”. Remember that Jesus is all you need. The lame man didn't know what to do, but he trusted in Jesus, and followed what he told him to do. Trust in him today – it will definitely change your life for ever.