

St. John's Gospel

Session # 8

Last time, we looked at Jesus healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethzatha. Jesus merely speaks the word – “Rise, take up your pallet and walk” and the man is healed.

Some scholars believe this story symbolizes the inability of Judaism to accomplish God's will that we all be made whole. The man has been lame for 38+ years, close to the 40 years the Hebrews spent wandering in the wilderness. The 5 porticoes of the pool, represent the 5 books of the Torah. Judaism was a gift, but it could not accomplish human wholeness and fulfillment because none of us can be right with God because we cannot lead a holy life. We sin. In Judaism, to be right with God, you needed to live a perfect life in accordance with the law. In Judaism, righteousness was based on what we can do by earning our place by how we live. But none of us can walk in God's ways, and we all therefore are “lame”. We can't be declared righteous through our own efforts. As St. Paul said: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Only Jesus can heal us and declare us right with God, through his death on the cross. Jesus the Incarnate Word can accomplish for us, what we can never accomplish ourselves.

This interpretation helps explain Jesus statement to the lame man in ch. 5 vs. 14: “See, you are well, sin no more”. It is Jesus alone who makes us whole. The rest of our life is lived as a response of thanksgiving for the gift of righteousness we receive through Jesus Christ.

This morning we pick it up with ch. 5 – Vs. 19, the discourse following the healing. This follows the Johannine way of writing his Gospel. We have a sign, and then a discourse following the sign.

The discourse following this healing reveals the escalating tension between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus is now clearly being hunted. In the eyes of the Jews, he has violated the sacred laws of Moses. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”. Rather than rejoice that a man lame for 38+ years has been healed, they are now out to get Jesus. This is a sad commentary about religion, and helps explain in part why so much harm and violence has been done in the name of God over the centuries.

In the face of being pursued, this discourse also reveals another layer of why the Jews felt Jesus must die. He makes the claim that he is unlike any other man. He makes the claim that he is divine, God incarnate. This is clearly blasphemy to make such a claim, punishable by death. The Jews were merely being faithful to their understanding.

In vs 16-18 – Jesus defends his Sabbath work. He says in vs. 17 – “God is working still” God works on the Sabbath. He gives life, babies are born, he judges evil. People die on the Sabbath. Jesus equates his work, his healing of the lame man, to God's work. Only God can judge and work on the Sabbath. So Jesus is defending this healing by saying I am God. Vs. 18 – This was clear to the Jews, this is why the Jews sought to kill him. He is claiming to be God. Unheard of. The stuff of a madman. Blasphemy. John says: Not only did he heal on the Sabbath, but he is calling God his father, making himself equal to

God. The Sabbath privilege of working on the Sabbath belongs to God alone, hence the outrage of the Jews. They realize that by making this claim he is claiming to be God.

Vs. 19 – Jesus says – this is not an arrogant boast of a madman or one who is delusional. He is completely dependent upon the Father. He claims nothing on his own accord. If God brings life into the world and judges those who die on the Sabbath, he too works. God has no day of rest, life takes place on the Sabbath. God gets no rest. What I see my father doing, I do.

Vs. 20-21 – Jesus defines the work God does on the Sabbath. He raises the dead and gives them life. So also (vs. 21), do I. That is why Jesus came, to give life.

Vs. 22-23 – Jesus claims to now be the judge. God has turned over judgement to the Son. “The father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son”. Salvation now comes through Jesus alone. So honor the Son. He who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent him.

Vs 24-25 - Highlight of realized eschatology - “He who hears my word and believes him who sent me – has eternal life. He will not be judged. He has passed from death to life. **The hour is coming, and now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. Those who hear will live.**

Jesus is telling them that the hour – the hour of the cross, the hour of mankind’s redemption is coming, and with my being sent, the hour now is. Salvation is at hand. Salvation is now available to all. God’s work is finished. “Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. But the choice is yours. Believe and be saved. Reject me and you will be judged. Vs. 25 – those who hear will live.

Vs 26-27 – God the Father and God the Son have lie in themselves. They are eternal, the same yesterday, today and forever. God the Father (vs 27) has given to His Son, the authority to execute judgement.

Vs. 28 – Those in the tombs, those who have already died, will hear my voice and come forth. Their judgement will be based on how they lived their lives (Judaism righteousness), Those who did good will be saved. Those who did evil – will be judged. This is classic theology of “works righteousness”. My mom died never thinking she was good enough to deserve heaven. I always told her she was right about that (even though she was a pretty good person), but I told her the good news of the Gospel is that you do not need to be good enough mom, Jesus has declared you to be right before God, so no worries, do you believe? Answer – yes – Mom then when you die you will head straight to God’s glory. She still struggled. We are accustomed in life to have to earn everything. Grace – free gift mom – just believe!

Vs. 31-47 – falls into 2 categories or themes. Vs. 31-40 – Deal with witnesses for Jesus. Vs. 41-47 are an attack on Jewish disbelief.

Vs 30 – Jesus tells the Jews about judgement – I do not make mistakes, as I hear I judge.

Those who bear witness to Jesus

Vs. 31 - I am not bearing witness to myself.

Vs. 32 – The Father bears witness to me

Vs. 33 – John the Baptist bears witness to me

Vs. 34 – My legitimacy does not come from others testimony

Vs. 35 – But John was a bright light and for a time you listened to him. People flocked into the wilderness to hear John preach and be baptized.

Vs. 36 – But there is a greater witness than John the Baptist, and that is the works that I am doing. They bear witness that the Father has sent me.

Vs. 37 – The Father bears witness to me and then Jesus makes an inflammatory accusation against the Jews: “His voice you have never heard, and you do not have his Word abiding in you. For you do not believe in me, the one He has sent.

Vs. 39 – The Scriptures bear witness to me. Scripture points to me being the Messiah, the one who grants eternal life. Yet you refuse to come to me, that you might have life.

Vs. 41-47 – attack on Jewish disbelief

Vs 41 – I do not receive glory from men

Vs. 42 – you do not have love within you

Vs. 43 – I came in Yahweh’s name, you reject me

Vs. 44 – You seek glory in one another, not from God

Vs. 45 – Jesus cuts to their very core with words that are the ultimate insult – “Don’t think it is I who will accuse you to the Father, it is Moses who will testify against you. The one upon whom you set your hope.

Vs. 46 – If you believed Moses, you would believe in me. But if you did not believe his writings, how can you believe in my words.

YIKES – the dye is now cast. The Jews are after Jesus - Blasphemy, working on the Sabbath, audacity to claim to be God and now he is openly attacking them. The cross looms and we are only finishing chapter 5!