

## Sermon – John 5:1-9 – The healing of the man by the pool...

I wonder what you would do if someone like Jesus came to you who had a chronic affliction of many years – asked if you wanted to get well – heard your tale of woe in not being able to enter into the pool that is reported to have the touch of an angel stirring and enriching the water with healing qualities – who then proceeds to command you to ‘pick up your bed and walk’ – where you find you are miraculously healed...

I don’t know about you – but I would be eternally grateful I think – but not this man...

The man healed in this story is perhaps the least willing and the least grateful of all the people Jesus heals in John’s Gospel.

While we end the story here today – it is not the end of the story – for surprise, surprise, Jesus is in trouble again – this time for healing on the Sabbath – or might it have been for ordering the man to take up his bed – to do work on the Sabbath. Either way Jesus is in trouble – and now the man is in trouble for his participation of carrying said mat.

The man then goes on to deny knowing Jesus – until Jesus encounters him again in the temple when the man then remembers the name and tells the authorities. Perfect ammunition for them to gang up on Jesus.

Of course, Jesus would say he was only doing his Father’s work – and there is the biggest ‘sin’ Jesus committed – calling God his ‘father’ and therefore making himself equal with him...

If this story tells us anything then it is that God’s healing – through Jesus – is not dependent on the quality or quantity of a person’s faith.

This man certainly doesn’t seem to show signs of faith or favour of Jesus – in fact he tries to blame his own breaching of the law firmly on to Jesus. ‘It was his fault – he healed me’. It seems he wants to take care of himself at the expense of Jesus...

So – the ‘sin’ can be seen on several levels – breaking rules on the Sabbath basically – but actually, as far as JESUS IS CONCERNED – the sin is the UNBELIEF – the rejection of the One sent by God.

Later as Jesus met up with the man in the temple, he tells him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you” (John 5:14). *Do not ‘unbelieve’ anymore.....*

But what we learn – and love about Jesus here is that his compassionate and healing love is not restricted by faith – that regardless of the consequences, healing is possible....

One might wonder why Jesus chose this particular man to heal out of all the invalids lying around the pool of Bethzatha. It seems like he could have made a better choice! Yet we see that the compassion and healing power of Jesus is not reserved only for those who are “deserving” -- for those whose faith is great and who respond to healing by believing in and following Jesus. Certainly Jesus heals such people also. But here Jesus heals one whose lack of faith and who even cooperates with those who persecute Jesus, who even seek to kill Jesus (John 5:18). Jesus loves...

For Jesus, ‘healing’ isn’t a matter of the quantity of faith either - and Jesus doesn’t heal for self-grandeur or gratification or praise. Quite simply he heals because it is the work he is sent to do by his Father.

In our Christian faith, the God whom Jesus makes known is a God who does not discriminate in giving good gifts to one person or another. If one person or another does not have life-giving healing this side of heaven’s gate – or life in abundance - then there must be something in our collective thread of human existence that – for now – is blocking the way, because our Christian faith – no matter how hard we have to dig deep to remember, believe and be comforted in challenging times of life – seems to be telling us that life is eternal and bigger than the eye can see – bigger than an invalid man could be grateful for – and bigger than any faithful heart can hold.... It tells us that comfort and strength and hope comes from reaching out – no matter how frail – to a loving God who wills that all may have life, and have it abundantly – and whose healing might just be – for now – in the peace and comfort that comes - not in the understanding – but actually in the longing for his long-awaited presence... (10:10)