



## **A Tale of Two Miracles**

**Message Notes, May 1, 2016**

John 4:43-5:15

We continue our journey through John. The four benefits to this study of the life/ministry of Jesus:

- Jesus shows us who God is. (John 1:18)
- Jesus show us how we are meant to live. (John 1:4, 9, 14)
- Jesus shows us what happens when heaven invades earth, in the now. (John 1:51)
- We “study” Him that we might know Him better. He is life! (John 17:3, 6-8)

Today we look at two healings. John is intentional in putting these two stories together – their contrasts reveal important truth and also, in each encounter, Jesus speaks something surprising, almost troubling – until we look more closely.

Read the passage to get the details. Without looking below, what contrasts do you notice?

Royal official (and father) / An invalid man

In Galilee (Jesus’ rural home region) / In Jerusalem (the bustling capital city)

A Royal official / A disabled nobody

Power and status / Weak and helpless

The official seeks Jesus out / Jesus seeks the invalid out

The official responds (with gratitude) / No evidence of any response from the healed invalid

His family even comes to believe / The invalid later “blames” Jesus to defend himself

Jesus works in both scenarios. He is no respecter of persons – he touched somebodies and nobodies alike.

Jesus met people where they were. His and His Father’s heart is for all!

### **So what of these surprising, seemingly troubling remarks of Jesus?**

**1.** In the royal official story, Jesus speaks to the surrounding crowd – “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe.” This seems harsh? What helpful clues does John gives?

Jesus had expressed earlier that “a prophet is not welcome in his own country” (John 4:44). He was back in Galilee, his home region. Back in Cana, where he turned water into wine. The people “welcomed him.” But Jesus knew their hearts, their motives. They were eager to see more fireworks! More miracles and wonders. They were enamored with Jesus the celebrity; not Jesus the Messiah of salvation and truth. They wanted what he could do more than who he was.

Jesus longs for us to know Him, the light, the living water. He doesn’t want us to simply long for his power and how he can make our lives work.

Jesus knew the official’s motives were pure – a father desperate out of love for his son. Jesus did the miracle, but he wanted to adjust the people’s perspective. He did it from a distance, without a show!

**2.** Jesus asks the invalid man a seemingly absurd question – “Do you want to get well?”



The legend of the day about this pool at Bethesda was that occasionally an angel would come and stir the waters. The first person to enter the pool at this stirring would be healed. Thus the crippled and infirmed would gather here daily hoping for this stirring. This was also a beggar's paradise. Devout religious people would come here to fulfill their duty of "giving alms".

A clue to Jesus' question lies in this saying – "A beggar often loses a good living by being cured."

This man has been coming here for 38 years. This is his pattern. It is familiar. He has figured out how to make his crippled life work. He has embraced his identity as an invalid. Healing would launch him into very unfamiliar territory. It would threaten the livelihood he has become accustomed to. It would shake his world. So Jesus' question is an honest, reasonable one. In fact, it is sincere – he is truly asking the man if he wants to be well. Does he want to embrace a new life that will be both wonderful and yet fearful and unfamiliar. Jesus understands; clearly this would be fearful and unsettling for the man. It would be for any of us. Jesus' question is for us: Are you willing to trust me with your wholeness, with the uncertainty of how it will come and how it will change your life. Do you want to get well?

- Are you ready to let go of your past (failures, regrets, shame, hurt from others)?
- Are you willing to release any sense of identity rooted in being broken or a victim?
- Are you ready to acknowledge and break any agreements you have made about who you are?
- Are you ready to forgive?
- Are you ready to step into the unfamiliar? And trust me to transform you, to make you whole?

Not all sickness is connected to sin; much is just part of living in our broken world. However, sometimes there is a connection between our sin and our sickness – sinful habits or addictions contribute to poor health. Worry, overworking, and stress can lead to health problems. And how we respond to our illnesses, disabilities can have a sinful dimension. This seems to be the case with this man. Jesus finds him later and tells him, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." Part of this warning to the man must've been this: "You are well; walk in your new wholeness. Don't go back to the familiar, to your old identity, to your begging."

### Reflection Questions

1. Are you like the royal official, desperate for the miraculous power of God to break into you burdensome need? Hear Jesus say, "You may go. Your son will live."
2. Are you like the crowd, consumed more with what Jesus can do, than with who He is – the bread of life, the living water, our Savior and our Lord. Hear Jesus say – "Hunger not so much for my miraculous power, but for me. Will you simply believe in who I am?"
3. Are you like the invalid by the pool, settled in your woundedness, claiming it as your identity and thereby choking off the grace of God in your life. Hear Jesus say, "Do you want to get well; to be whole? Are you willing to embrace the unknown of my transforming grace for you?"