

## JESUS HEALED A 38 YEAR INVALID

John 5:1-15

Key verse 5:8

**"Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."**

Thanks be to the Lord for the blessed study of John's gospel, through which we may know who Jesus really is. Last week, we learned that Jesus has the life-giving power that saved a terminally ill son from death. We could repent of our sign-seeking faith and, like the royal official, trust in the word of Jesus absolutely that in Jesus our children, our sheep and our campus are alive.

Today's passage is about the third sign of Jesus, namely the healing of a 38 year invalid. Jesus visited this chronically sick person, aroused the holy desire in his heart and made him rise from his paralysis and begin a new life through the power of his Word. May God give each of us the holy desire to rise from our chronic paralysis. Through the power of the Word of Jesus, we may rise up and live a life glorifying God. We also learn how important it is to always remember the grace of Jesus and to clearly stand on the side of Jesus. Let us pray for the students that they will be able to rise from their spiritual paralysis, come alive and be used as a kingdom of priests for world mission.

### 1. Do you want to get well? (1-7)

Let's look at verses 1 to 3: "Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed." Today's event took place in Jerusalem during one of the great Jewish festivals. Many people came to Jerusalem to enjoy the joyous feast. But Jesus did not come to celebrate, but he was walking that day by a pond called Bethesda. Bethesda means "house of mercy." It was a pool near the Sheep Gate, where there were 5 large halls. This place was a gathering place for all kinds of disabled, blind, lame and paralyzed people. Most people would avoid such a place if possible, but Jesus came there because he had a burning shepherd heart for these needy people.

Why were they here? According to the footnote to verse 3, this pool was known for the fact that from time to time there was a miracle when someone was the first to step into the moving water. Now many needy and sick people were waiting for this one opportunity for healing. Everyone hoped that next time they would be the first and be healed.

We can well imagine that there was strong competition among the people here. In normal times everyone was friendly and helpful to the others. But when it came to healing, everyone was selfish and did his best to defeat the others, to be first himself. So in the end this

society was characterized by pure egoism. Most of them suffered from repeated defeat and somehow had to come to terms with their miserable situation.

The people at this pool are in many respects a reflection of our society. We too experience strong competition, egoism and the hope for a miracle that would apparently solve all our problems at once. Many people believe that humanism or progress would solve all problems. But why then are there so many sick, so many hopeless and so many psycho patients? Without Jesus there is no true hope and no true life.

Let us look at verse 5: "One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years." This person must have been one of the most hopeless cases of all. He may have come there as a youth or a young man with the hope of being healed. But even after 38 years, there was no change in his life. He was still as sick and helpless as before, maybe just a little older and grumpier. John does not tell us exactly whether he was paralyzed, but only describes him as invalid. In any case he could not move properly anymore. For many years now he had been lying around on his mat and was dependent on help from others.

Jesus inquired exactly about this man. Humanly seen there could be no hope for him. 38 years is just too long. But Jesus had hope. Jesus had a lamenting shepherd heart for this man and he was ready to help him, even if it would mean persecution and even danger to his life, as we will see later. Let us read verse 6 together: "When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

Jesus addressed the man personally and asked him, "Do you want to get well?" Jesus was ready to heal him. Jesus is the Son of God, the Creator God, where nothing is impossible. Jesus humbled himself and came into the world to heal people, to free them from the clutches of the devil, so that they could lead a healthy and God-glorious life again. Now Jesus came with His mercy to this chronically sick man because He wanted to heal and change him so that he could move and walk again and have an independent life. The first step to healing is that he himself has the desire to be healed. That is why Jesus asked him this question. After 38 years he had come to terms with many things. His wish was buried and he just remained apathetically lying on his mat. Jesus wanted to arouse a new holy desire in his heart, namely to start a healthy and independent life.

According to the testimony of some medical doctors, there are quite a few young men who are paralyzed and helpless and regularly appear at the emergency clinic instead of living a lively and dynamic life. Because of the internal paralysis, some of them even sit in a wheelchair, even though they do not have any recognizable illness. There are many people who are internally paralyzed and bound by various things.

This man had been lying there for 38 years. And now he was just full of grumbling and complaining about the other people and about the conditions. But Jesus had mercy for this man and wanted to help him to start a new life.

Let us look at his reaction in verse 7: "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Here we see the man's inner paralysis. He could not even answer Jesus' question correctly. He was fixated on the idea that he had to be the first to get into the water, but he could not do it. Instead of expressing his wish, he only complained and

grumbled about the other people who allegedly would not help him, and about the conditions that he was always disadvantaged.

We also see quite a few people in our time who are paralyzed in a similar way. Young people who should be strong, live a dynamic life and be a blessing to others are paralyzed inside. Some lie around on their beds for hours or days; some cannot progress in their studies; others are bound by a pixel machine in a virtual world; others cannot overcome their fixed way of thinking. In one respect, we are all like such paralyzed people if we do not live a life glorifying God.

When I was invited to Bible study at the beginning of my studies, Jesus also asked me: "Do you want to get well?" At that time I thought that I wasn't sick at all because I had just moved to Bonn and my studies were going well. But by studying the Bible, God opened my spiritual eyes that I was a cold-hearted, loveless and hurtful egoist who didn't even care about a friend who almost died of anorexia. I was only interested in my own success and well-being. Above all, my relationship with God was completely broken by my rebellion and pride. But Jesus came to me to make me well. Jesus gave his life on the cross to restore my relationship with my Creator God and to change me in Him. This word gave me a holy wish, so that I was able to invite Jesus into my life to heal and change me, so that I could be used as a blessing, even as a responsible full-time shepherd according to God's great plan.

Jesus asks you today: "Do you want to get well?" Jesus came into this world, even gave his own life on the cross to heal and change you and me, so that we can live again according to the purpose of creation and be used as a blessing in this generation. Let us hear Jesus' question personally and answer it by faith.

## **2. Get up! Pick up your mat and walk! (8-15)**

Let us now consider verses 8 and 9a: "Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked." Although the man could not say "yes" clearly and could not express his desire, Jesus took care of him. Jesus gave him a command: "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk". Actually, it was an impossible command. He had collected enough medical certificates for 38 years that he could not get up. He could have criticized Jesus for not understanding his situation. But to our astonishment, the sick man accepted the word of Jesus by faith and learned that he got well. The word of Jesus gave him strength so that he could move his legs and get up, and then even pack and carry his own bed away.

This healing was the wonderful work of the Word of Jesus. Jesus' Word has the power of creation to bring something new out of nothing. Jesus' Word had power to strengthen the muscles that had not been used for 38 years and to let a chronically sick person go. This event testifies that Jesus is the Almighty Creator God.

To experience the power of Jesus' Word in our lives, obedience of faith is very important. Usually people are very dependent on what they can see, experience and understand. If a doctor tells us that a certain medication protects us from Covid-19, we are willing to swallow it. But when Jesus tells us: "Get up", we automatically think that it is not possible because we have tried it many times before. This man could have accused Jesus of making fun of him. But he accepted Jesus' word in faith and just obeyed him. Then he could stand

up and start a new and independent life. For the first time in 38 years, he could carry his bed mat himself and walk.

A young woman thought very fatalistically about her life, considering herself a grey duckling. She could not see how beautiful God had created her and how much potential God had given her. So for a long time she lived with the excuse: "I can't!" But by studying the Bible, she was able to find the value of her life. Through faith in Jesus she was able to stand up and start a new life as a shepherdess for the students. For a long time it seemed impossible for her to complete her studies. Then her shepherd gave her one word: Mark 11:22: "Have faith in God". Jesus' word gave her the strength to complete her Master's degree for the glory of God alone. Now she gets up early every day and carries her bed, praying for the salvation of the young students and for the M-Mission.

One young man was outwardly very active. But he led only an outward church life while sinning in the darkness and following his own feelings and desires. But through the Word of God, Deuteronomy 6:5, he received the spiritual desire to live a new life for the glory of God. He wanted to love God with all his heart. Jesus changed him to dedicate his new life to the mission of God with all his heart. Although there were many temptations and painful experiences, he still holds on to love his God with all his heart, soul and strength.

God created man in his own image. God has given us creativity, energy, zeal and love. But many people do not live out what God has given them. They remain lazy and lazy sitting and blame the conditions or other people for it. Jesus came into this world to heal us and restore us. He even shed His own blood on the cross to free us from the clutches and chains of Satan that keep us invisibly imprisoned. He wants to heal and change us and give us a new dynamic and glorious life. Through faith we are able to give the Word of God to the paralyzed young people. Bible study is the way that they can experience the power of the Word of Jesus, become spiritually alive and also be transformed into shepherds for their fellow students.

The healing of this man, who was invalid for 38 years, was the work of God and the miracle of Jesus. But let us look at how the Jews reacted to the man's healing. Let us read verses 9b and 10: "The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." When the Jews saw that the man wore his bed mat on the Sabbath, they rebuked him for violating the commandment of Sabbath rest. Actually, they should rejoice greatly because this man, after so many years of helplessness and hopelessness, had begun a new life, and could even carry his own things by himself. It was the work of God. But instead they focused only on the fact that he would break the Jewish law by doing so.

Let us look at verses 11 to 13. It was the time for the man to witness the gracious intervention of God in his life. But instead he let himself be intimidated by the Jews and defended himself that he was only following the instructions. He did not even know who had healed him. The royal official in chapter 4 investigated carefully and believed in Jesus with his whole house. But this man showed no interest in who Jesus was who had made him well.

Let us look at verse 14. Jesus found him again in the temple and gave him a serious warning: "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." Jesus reminded him of the grace he had received and warned him not to forget this. To forget

and betray Jesus' grace is an even worse sin, with eternal consequences. If we have experienced Jesus' grace, then we should be on the side of Jesus. Unfortunately, the man did not accept Jesus' warning. According to verse 15, he went straight to the Jews and betrayed Jesus. As a result, Jesus was persecuted by them (16) and even his life was threatened (18).

Jesus had shown this man his undeserved grace and given him a new life. Outwardly he had become healthy, but inwardly he was still paralyzed and dependent on men. So he betrayed the grace of Jesus by saying that Jesus had healed him but had given him a wrong command and was therefore guilty. In John chapter 9 we read the story of a man born blind who was also healed by Jesus. This blind man was subsequently harassed by the Jews and was supposed to accuse Jesus of being a sinner. But he answered them, "Is he a sinner? I do not know, but I do know that I was blind and now I see." He simply testified to what Jesus had done for him. By holding on to the grace of Jesus, he was finally able to corner even the Jews and prove that Jesus had come from God.

It is very important that we hold on to God's grace and God's work in our lives. This man forgot the grace of Jesus and so it came about that he finally worked with the Jews to persecute Jesus. Let us not forget the grace of God, but let us actively witness to it and stand with determination on the side of Jesus. The writing of our testimony is the best opportunity to remember the grace of Jesus, to actively witness to it and thus stand resolutely on Jesus' side.

Today we have come to know the mercy of Jesus to visit a man who has been invalid for 38 years, to arouse the holy desire in his heart and to make him rise to a new life through the power of his Word. Jesus also asks us: "Do you want to get well?" And he gives us a command: "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Let us no longer sit in spiritual paralysis, but come to Jesus who will make us well, so that we can live a new, dynamic and God-glorious life. Let us witness the grace of Jesus and stand with determination on the side of Jesus by living as shepherds and Bible teachers for the students. May God use our one-to-one Bible study so that the young people in Europe will be healed and rise up and be used as a great army of God for world mission.