

Wednesday, March 4, 2015

Written by Benjamin Phipps, senior MDiv student, and brought to you by the World Mission Initiative at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

### Scripture

John 5:1-18

1 After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. 3 In these lay many invalids — blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” 9 At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” 18 For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

### Devotional

Jesus’s question, “Do you want to be made well?” seems to have an obvious answer. However, I wonder how many of us spend excessive time and energy trying to prove that we are *not* in need of healing. Imagine Jesus asking you the same question. How would you respond? “Well, Jesus I really appreciate the offer, but I have everything in order, so no thank you.”

Admitting that we need to be made well can be terrifying. When giving Jesus the opportunity to make things well, he may tell us to do something that seems ridiculous, like picking up our mats and walking. It seems too easy; such a simple command couldn’t possibly lead to a changed life! Yet, somehow in the mystery of God’s grace, humble obedience brings transformation. Where does it begin? Well, it begins at the pool where the invalids lay, at the place where we admit we need to be made well and cannot do it on our own. It begins not with our own pretexts, but with simple obedience and surrender to the commands of Jesus.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, you long to make us well. Yet, too often in our sin and pride, we refuse your help. Forgive us for our stubbornness, and help us to surrender our lives to you so that you can transform us into new creations. Give us the strength to serve you, the wisdom to obey you, and the humility to cry out to you. Amen.