

THE POOL OF BETHESDA

Adapted from a Family Talk by the Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

Reading: John 5:1-9

The Lord was coming to Jerusalem for a feast, and He came to a pool of water called Bethesda, which means “house of mercy”. Once in awhile, the water in this pool got stirred up by an angel of the Lord. And when the waters were stirred up, the first person who went into the water would be miraculously healed of any disease he had. But only the first person who came into the pool after the water was stirred by the angel, would be healed.

So people waited around the pool, watching to see when the water would be stirred up. Because they were waiting a long time, some of the people had beds, made of cloth and straw. A person who was sick or could not walk well, could lie on that bed while he waited.

When the Lord came to the pool He saw a man lying on a bed, who had been sick and unable to walk well for thirty-eight years. That is a long time—thirty-eight years! So the Lord said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” (John 5:6). And the man answered and said, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me” (John 5:7).

How sad this seems. Think of this man waiting and watching. Over and over again, he saw that the waters were stirred up, and he tried to get up from his bed and go down into the pool. But because he was sick, he could not move quickly, so someone else would always get into the pool first.

The Lord asked this man, “Do you want to be made well?” And the man really did want to be made well. And so the Lord said simply, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk!” (John 5:8). We may wonder how the man could do this? He was crippled! But as soon as the Lord said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk!” the man felt power coming back into his legs, and he was able to stand up. After thirty-eight years, he could now stand up and walk around! He even had the strength to lift up his bed. It was a miracle!

Now all the miracles that the Lord did tell us something about our own lives. Sometimes we can get into habits of thinking in selfish ways or doing naughty things, and we may not want to change those habits. We are spiritually sick, and stuck in our own false ideas. This is a bit like lying on a bed and not being able to get up!

Now, the Lord does not force us to be good. We have to *want* to get rid of our evils and learn to follow the Lord in order to get to heaven. We have to answer the question, “Do you want to be made well?” If we truly want to be healed, then the Lord can do the miracle for us. He can say, “Rise, stand up! Turn your eyes toward heaven. Find out what I am teaching you. Follow Me.”

When the Lord told the sick man, “Take up your bed and walk,” He meant that the man should walk on a path that would lead him toward heaven. And that is what the man did. And that is what we can do when we want to be healed by the Lord and to follow Him to heaven.

Amen.