

## John 5:1-18 – The Pool of Bethesda

Divine initiative

Divine sufficiency

Divine imperative

Divine identity

### Divine initiative

#### 1-6

6: Do you want to get well?

It doesn't matter who you are and it doesn't matter where you are, and it doesn't matter how incapacitated you feel – no-one is beyond the mercy and grace of God.

Bethesda means either "house of mercy" or "house of grace". This meaning may have been thought appropriate, since the location was seen as a place of disgrace due to the presence of invalids (in-valids), and as a place of grace due to the granting of healing.

You may feel in-valid.

You may have felt that way for a long time. This man had been sitting here by the pool of Bethesda for 38 years. Think about that.

38 years of feeling and identifying yourself as in-valid.

He is sitting here because there is a legend, a belief that the angels come and stir the waters and whoever jumps in first after the waters are stirred gets to be healed.

But he has been here for 38 years and his condition has not changed.

Often, we have the approach or the belief that we must lift ourselves up out of our troubles and our in-validity. Some of the stories we tell and the songs we sing express that sentiment.

“I will arise and go to Jesus, he will embrace me in his arms”

Many religions teach that God saves the worthy. The triers. The enlightened ones. The ones that have followed the rules, purified themselves, emptied themselves, followed the right steps, fulfilled the right conditions....

The initiative is with us.

But Christianity says otherwise.

Paul says that **God justifies the ungodly.**

That we are not saved by our life but by his.

There is a **divine initiative.**

This man did not approach Jesus. He did not do anything, say anything, ask anything – Jesus approached him. Jesus initiated the conversation.

“Do you want to get well?”

The man responds by saying why he can't get well. No-one will help him into the water.

The Bible makes clear that the initiative is always with God. The divine initiative.

Think about Jesus with the woman at the well. Think about him here.

There is no-one that is beyond the initiative of God.

No one is in-valid.

No gender – male or female – no ethnicity – no social group – no immoral person – no-one is beyond the initiative of God. No-one is too far gone.

But it has been 38 years.

“Do you want to get well?”

Years I spent in vanity and pride,  
Caring not my Lord was crucified,  
Knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.

Refrain:

Mercy there was great and grace was free,  
Pardon there was multiplied to me,  
There my burdened soul found liberty–  
At Calvary.

This is Bethesda – house of **mercy and grace**.

Mercy there was great and grace was free....

Mercy is when **I don't get** what **I do deserve**.

Grace is when **I do get** what **I don't deserve**.

One of the things that Jesus taught his disciples to pray – taught us to pray – is “Let your kingdom come”.

You be king God. You rule. Let your activity be present and visible and tangible – here on earth as it is in heaven.

Let your divine initiative come into play.

What about that family member who does not want to know, who has no interest. What about that colleague, that friend – who seems diametrically opposed to faith.

What about you – who feels disqualified, who feels unable to have faith, profess faith, live in faith....

Who feels in-valid

I have no-one to help me...

The good news is that we are all in the same boat.

Romans 3:10-12

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; **there is no one who seeks God**. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

John 6:44

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

Acts 16:14

“The Lord opened Lydia's heart”

Isa. 65:24

“Before they call, I will answer”

God is the initiator!

No-one would go towards him without him coming towards us first.

1 John 4:19

“We love him because he first loved us”

We sing it sometimes – God is working, even when we don't see that he's working.

And suddenly - like on this day – we see the wonderful intervention, the initiative of God.

9 “**At once the man was cured**; he picked up his mat and walked”

Let your kingdom come!

### **Divine sufficiency**

As well as divine initiative, we have divine sufficiency.

6-9 “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?” “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.” 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.”

I have no-one to help me get into the pool.

Healing is in that water. I need that for my salvation and healing  
Substitutes for God and salvation – for divine sufficiency...

The healing is in the water.

Do you remember the woman at the well. Jesus talks to her about  
living water...

Sir, give me this water...

I am the source of this living water....

Jesus help me get in the water...

And Jesus says: I am the water you need....

I am the living water...

John goes on in this chapter to say that life is in the Son

“For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead,  
so the Son gives life to anyone he wants.” (John 5:21)

This water – this life – this eternal life is found in Jesus.

He is sufficient.

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for  
living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know  
him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvellous  
glory and excellence.” (2 Peter 1:3)

We are not looking to a pool for our healing and our salvation, but  
we look to other things to save us and sustain us and make us  
valid when we feel in-valid.

Jesus says: "You don't need it. Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!"

You don't need the magic water.

You need me. I will give you everything you need for life and godliness...

I am the water you need.

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:37-38)

### **Divine imperative**

9 - 15

You are well – stop sinning.

Jesus is calling him ultimately to follow him. It is a call to conversion and faith in God.

To believe.

In view of God's mercy and grace – his initiative in your life – now turn around and follow me.

Remember John's reason for writing:

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

The call goes out to Nicodemus:

“You must be born again”

To the woman at the well

4:13-14 “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

To the royal official

The healing of whose son leads him and his whole household to belief and faith in Jesus...

Jesus doesn't want only this man's physical body to be healed, he wants his soul to be healed – his ultimate salvation.

“By God's Word at last my sin I learned–  
Then I trembled at the Law I'd spurned,  
Till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary. [Refrain]  
Now I've giv'n to Jesus ev'rything,  
Now I gladly own Him as my King,  
Now my raptured soul can only sing of Calvary.”

Mercy there was great and grace was free!

This was a place of mercy and grace ....

But more than that – that mercy and grace leads us to a place of repentance – of handing our life over to God!



“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, **in view of God’s mercy**, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.” (Romans 12:1-2)

This man seems to fail in this regard – he turns around and reports Jesus to the Jewish authorities....

There arises an argument around the fact that Jesus has performed this miracle on the Sabbath ... and the Jewish authorities begin to go after Jesus...

But ultimately, what Jesus asserts here and in the rest of the chapter is his..

### **Divine identity**

Only one person who can work on the Sabbath without sin – and that is God ... and I am he.

He was making himself equal with God. Jesus says elsewhere “I am Lord of the Sabbath” and only I bring the true reality of rest for your souls.

Jesus is the Son of God – come into the world to save us from our sins. Sent by the Father, endorsed and instructed and informed by the Father.

Co-equal with God the Father.

I am the Messiah ...

I am he...

That is who this man has met.

That is who we can meet at the house of mercy and grace.

He says to us – get up and follow me!

### Community group questions

1. Who initiated this encounter and what role did the man's actions play?
2. This man was an invalid – you could say in-valid... How do we / others feel in-valid, or how might we sometimes think that we or others are beyond God's grace and mercy?
3. He had been suffering by the pool for 38 years. What happens when we suffer with something for a long time? How can we carry on in an attitude of faith and joy when we have long-standing issues that God does not seem to address?
4. Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Your kingdom come". What does this mean and how can we pray this and see God's kingdom more in our circumstances?
5. What does the Bible say about God acting first and us responding? (See for example Romans 3:10-12 / John 6:44 / Acts 16:14 / Isaiah 65:24)
6. The man said he couldn't get well because he couldn't get into the water – what might be some of the things that we look to make us well or help us feel valid?
7. What does it look like to let Jesus validate us / heal us? How is he sufficient and how can we live in the reality of that sufficiency?
8. Read 2 Peter 1:3 together – how can we live in the reality of this verse?
9. Bethesda means house of mercy or house of grace. How can we access God's grace and mercy – where do we need God's grace and mercy in our life or in the life of someone we know and love?
10. Pray for one another for God's kingdom to come – for God's healing power and cure of souls!

