

I Need a Miracle:
Our Eyes are Upon You, Lord
John 5:1-18

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Text Introduction: We are in a series called “I Need a Miracle.” The series is based on a couple of things. One, I just sensed that this is where we are right now. Several people in our church need a miracle in their health. Others have needs in their family. We are in a need of a miracle in our country. Disunity rules these United States of America. Disregard for God’s Laws rule our laws. We need spiritual awakening. This series is also based on the 7 miracles or signs as they are technically called in the Gospel of John. So, our strategy is to ask God for our own miracles as we walk our way through these 7 miracles in John. We have considered two so far. The miracle at a wedding in Cana shows us that when we have a miracle, we can call on Jesus. The miracle of healing a royal official’s son shows us the desperation in our needs before God. Today, we consider the third miracle and a second healing miracle—the healing of a man at the Pool of Bethesda.

Text: After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.² By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five colonnades.³ Within these lay a large number of the sick—blind, lame, and paralyzed [—waiting for the moving of the water,⁴ because an angel would go down into the pool from time to time and stir up the water. Then the first one who got in after the water was stirred up recovered from whatever ailment he had].

⁵ One man was there who had been sick for 38 years.⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷ “Sir,” the sick man answered, “I don’t have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

⁸ “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk!”⁹ Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath,¹⁰ so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath! It’s illegal for you to pick up your mat.”

¹¹ He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹² “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk?’” they asked.¹³ But the man who was cured did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

¹⁴ After this, Jesus found him in the temple complex and said to him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.”¹⁵ The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

¹⁶Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus responded to them, “My Father is still working, and I am working also.” ¹⁸This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill Him: Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Introduction: Last week I began by outlining some similarities and differences that the first two miracles had. It seemed like an appropriate place to start, but I really did not realize how important and instructive that was. As I began my preparation this week, I realized how important that approach was. Putting these two healing miracles side by side really shows a contrast that helps us to think about application for this miracle before us today.

We would assume that these back to back healing miracles are just that—two miracles of Jesus’ power to heal. Indeed, in each story someone is healed. In each case, Jesus gave an act of obedience to follow. To the royal official, he must go home believing that Jesus has healed his son at the spoken word. To the man at the pool, Jesus said, “Get up, pick up your mat, and start walking.”

But that is where the similarities end. The differences are striking. Note these differences:

- Royal official/ a beggar
- The royal official asked for healing/Jesus asked the beggar
- Jesus healed from a distance for the royal official/Jesus healed up close for the man at the pool
- Miracle produces delight and belief/Miracle produces disgust and accusation

Please remember that John did not include all of the stories about Jesus that he could have. He tells us at the end of the Gospel that there are many more things that Jesus did. We presume that this includes additional miracles. So, the Holy Spirit causes John to include these specific stories and these specific miracles. That begs the question “Why?” Surely, we ask that about this miracle. Why this story? This man? This miracle?

This miracle confirms some basic thoughts about miracles!

1. This miracle confirms my basic definition of miracles.

Miracles are those things that can only be described by the phrase “God did it!”

This man’s theology is shattered. To this point in his 38 years of illness, he believed he understood how healing happened. He believed some in some complicated formula of being first into the water. This miracle shows us that God did it.

2. This miracle confirms my basic question about miracles.

I don’t understand miracles. I don’t understand who or how. This miracle confirms that I won’t. Why is this man healed? Out of all the people at that pool, why this man?

I ask that about your need for a miracle. Why do some people get healed and some people die? We say things like “God knows” and He does, but there seems to be injustice in all of that. To be

honest, I'm at a place in my life where I would rather say, "I don't know" or "I don't understand it."

Just know this—God is not going to fit into our boxes. Don't let someone say to you, "Pray this particular prayer, read this particular book, go to this particular preacher and let him lay hands on you." God is not going to be molded into our theological boxes.

3. This miracle confirms a basic conclusion about miracles.

- **God is confirming who He is.**

That is the whole purpose of the book of John and the point of this story.

- **God is chasing us.**

God does use miracles and answered prayer to pursue us. Unlike the disciples and unlike the royal official (of last week's miracle), this beggar was not pursuing Jesus, but Jesus was pursuing Him. And in some way, God is pursuing you.

- **God is confronting spiritual issues as He cures physical issues.**

If you have been listening, you have heard me say then that sickness is not the reason that people get sick. It might be sometimes, but not all times. However, this man had spiritual issues with which to deal.

God is always doing something greater than just the miracle.

Conclusion: So what? I'm struggling a lot more than I thought I would with this series. I knew that miracles were hard to understand, but I'm not even sure this series is helping me understand miracles any more. So, where does that leave us? It leaves us still believing in God, the Almighty. It still leaves us with the gift of prayer and the gift of faith.

There is a story in the Old Testament (2 Chronicles 20) about the days of the reign of King Jehoshaphat. Word comes to the King that "a vast number" has assembled against Judah. Jehoshaphat calls the people to pray. In his prayer he says this: "For we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against us. We do not know what to do, but we look to you." That is, our eyes are upon you.

I sense that is what we are to do.

But then God answers. "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast number, for the battle is not yours, but God's."

And that's what I want us to hear today again.