

Sunday morning August 6th 2017 at CBC

Sermon outline: 'Signs of life' - John 5:1-30

Sign 3 – the man healed at the pool of Bethesda

[1] THE SOVEREIGNTY OF JESUS AS REVEALED IN HIS CHOICE

One of the (many) questions that arises in the mind of anyone who reads about the incident at the pool of Bethesda is how and why Jesus chose to offer healing to just one person amongst many.

Did Jesus choose this particular man when he discovered (naturally or supernaturally we are not told) how long he had been afflicted? We do not know, and in any case no doubt there were others who would also have merited help. What is even more striking is that it appears – from the later conversation Jesus had with this man (v14) - that his illness was a direct result of some sin in his life. That being the case, you might conclude many other people at the pool that day were more deserving of Jesus's help than this man. Yet it is this man to whom Jesus offers help.

But surely he does not deserve it!

Quite possibly not. But then, did anyone then, and does anyone now, deserve to have Jesus help them?

[2] THE POWER OF JESUS AS REVEALED IN HIS ACTIONS

Last week we saw a man seeking the help of Jesus because he believed that Jesus could help him (albeit that initially his understanding of how Jesus would help him was limited). Here,

this man seems never to have heard of Jesus or met him, and shows no anticipation at all of what Jesus might do.

But the two incidents in John 4 and 5 (this one and the healing of the official's son) have this in common – Jesus simply spoke an authoritative word and healing came immediately.

What we have here is another example of the unique authority and power that Jesus exerted. This power is not mere human power. Even his enemies never denied that he could do miracles, they freely acknowledged the fact. – which makes their opposition to him all the more sad.

[3] THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS REVEALED IN HIS WORDS

You might expect the story to end happily, as it were. But there was a complication – the day on which this event had taken place was the Jewish Sabbath. It should not have been a problem at all. But by the time in which Jesus lived, the religious culture had managed to accumulate a considerable number of additional regulations applying to the Sabbath.

When asked to explain his conduct (carrying a mat = work) the man refers to the person who had made him well. In due course he learns who it is who has healed him. He goes and tells the authorities, and this leads to a confrontation between them and Jesus which lasts from verse 16 to the end of the chapter (45).

[a] Jesus's identity as God's unique son

In response to the criticism that he has healed the man on the Sabbath – note that the objection is now not that the man was

carrying his mat on the Sabbath but rather that Jesus had healed him on the Sabbath – Jesus applies the principle that God is always at his work (including on the Sabbath) to justify his own actions: *'my Father is always at his work to this very day and I too am working.'*

There is no doubt as to what Jesus was saying and his opponents realised it – (v18) he was making himself equal with God. In verse 20 he makes the connection between himself and God even clearer. He is effectively saying, 'like Father, like son' – and he is the son.

[b] Jesus's identity as God's anointed saviour

This salvation is described in terms of 'raising the dead to life'. This is something that the Father does (21) and which, therefore, naturally, the son also does (21). Again, Jesus is following in his father's footsteps. And notice that *'the son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.'*

Here, perhaps, is the nearest that we get to an explanation of why Jesus selected that paralysed man for healing. He was pleased to do it.

[i] If we are Christian believers this morning we should recognise with great thankfulness that the reason we have spiritual life is because the Lord was pleased to give it to us.

[ii] If we have not yet come to faith, we should take to heart those words, *'the son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.'*

Salvation is God's gift and if we have not yet received it we should be concerned. But does that mean that if we are not yet believers in Christ we can only wait and hope and see if the Lord should favour us? Paradoxically as it may seem, in this very gospel we have the answer that question. See: [John 20:30-31](#) and [John 3:14-16](#). Here is all the encouragement we need to believe in Christ here and now.

[c] Jesus's identity as God's appointed judge

Once again we find Jesus using the 'like Father like son' principle. The Bible elsewhere makes it clear that God is the final judge. In verse 28 Jesus speaks of a time that has not yet come:

[John 5:28-29](#) Compare: [Daniel 12:2-3](#)

This is why salvation matters – God has set a day when he will judge the world. It has always been an essential part of the Christian message. Peter and Paul were the first two great leaders in the Christian church. Each of them articulated this great truth: see: [Acts 10:42-43](#); [2 Peter 3:1-7](#); [Acts 17:29-31](#)

CONCLUSION

So the sign of the healing of the paralysed man is exactly that – a sign. A sign always points to something greater than itself, and that is what this healing does. It leads us to hearing Jesus declare his identity as the son of God, the saviour of sinners, the judge of the world.

May God enable all us to see him in faith for who he is, and to put our trust in him. To God be the glory, amen!