

John Chapter 5

When Jesus approaches the man by the pool who couldn't walk, he asks him a fairly straight forward question: "Do you want to be healed?" But, rather than answer his question directly, the man starts making excuses for why he has not already been healed. He has given up hope so much that he can't even answer the question as it's asked.

Jesus doesn't focus on this response, though. Disregarding any kind of excuses the man might come up with, Jesus tells him to get up and carry his bed. Apparently, this constitutes "work" according to the traditions of the day, something not to be done on the Sabbath. Nevertheless, Jesus tells him to take a walk while carrying his bed, even though it is the Sabbath.

Do you think Jesus knows how this will come across? Does he know there will be complaints about this man "working" on the Sabbath? Of course he does! But he does it anyway.

He could have waited. The man hasn't been able to walk for thirty-eight years. What's another day to him? But Jesus chooses not to wait. Jesus decides today is the day. And he does so knowing exactly the kind of reaction he's going to get. Why?

Because, actions like these are more noticeable when they're done in opposition to the standard way of doing things. It's called "pattern interrupt." If Jesus waits until tomorrow to heal this man, who's even going to notice? Everyone will be too busy with their own work. But Jesus takes this opportunity, on a day when everyone is supposed to be thinking about the things of God and not "working," to perform a healing act of God.

The Sabbath is a time to worship God. When we worship God, we should do the things Jesus would do. On this particular Sabbath, as with many others, the Jews want to overemphasize the day, regardless of anything else that might happen. They aren't interested in hearing about a miracle that has been performed on this day, not if it breaks their traditions.

Many church leaders unintentionally offer similar advice today. They emphasize attendance in a particular place at a particular time over all else. We are discouraged from participating in anything that might prevent us from missing a regularly scheduled event within the church building. We are sometimes even discouraged from participating in other events in which we might be able to participate in a work God is doing elsewhere if it means we will miss a church sponsored event.

Jesus encourages us to follow God's prompting. If you can join God in the work he is doing in a person or place, it doesn't matter what time it is, or what other events are happening somewhere else. Join God now.

Notice that Jesus heals the man, and the conversation ends. It's not until later, when he runs into him again, that Jesus tells him not to sin anymore. That isn't his primary purpose in his interactions with this man. His primary purpose is to provide a benefit to this man. To heal him of his pain.

Next, Jesus tells the Jews about his relationship with the Father. Throughout this speech, the idea of judgement comes up. It is interesting how this is the topic he brings up right after performing a miracle and healing a man without passing judgement on him, without even mentioning his sin until after the miracle had already taken place.

This is how we should strive to relate to people. We should offer to help before we condemn people in our hearts; show compassion before assuming the worst; get to know a person before allowing their personal life choices to taint our opinion about them. That's the model Jesus gives us, so follow it.

Next, Jesus speaks directly to the religious people. He tells them their religion lacks God's love and compassion. They are caught up in their traditions and rituals and too busy being religious to share the compassion of the God they talk about. They don't recognize who Jesus is or the things he is doing, because they are so caught up in their own traditions. They have even forgotten their own Scriptures, and they cannot recognize God in their midst.

Be careful not to do the same. The whole life of Jesus is a picture of a man who loves people so much that he doesn't care about the consequences he will bring on himself. He chooses to help people, because that is the heart of the Father.

So, he heals and the religious people hate him for stepping outside their traditions and the status quo. Maybe we should care a little less what our religious friends might think of us, and pay a little more attention to the way Jesus interacted with the religious compared to how he related to those suffering. Are you more concerned about keeping tradition or about bringing the peace of Jesus into the lives of those around you?