

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” But he answered them, “The Man who healed me, that Man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

John’s Gospel is such a delight to read and hear. Jesus has identified Himself as the Son of Man, the heaven sent Bridegroom come to claim His Bride, come to rescue and save her, come to give her more than she could ever desire or deserve. As with Jewish marriages, Jesus’ betrothal to the human race was arranged beforehand—from eternity by His Father in heaven. He comes with creative power. He comes with life-giving power. Born the Son of Mary, Jesus comes filled with and moved by the love of His heavenly Father.

With each celebration of the Lord’s Supper, we call to our Father in heaven. “Do this for My remembrance,” Jesus tells us. Therefore, as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup you cry: “*Behold our Shield, / O God; look on the face of Your A- / nointed!*” Jesus, Your Son and the divinely appointed Savior of the world, has offered Himself for the sins of all people. Help us in our troubles, Lord. Save us from sickness and death. Deliver us into Your courts that we may live forever. To dwell in the world is to live in tents of wickedness, but You, O God, have brought us here into the house of God.”

When I remind our elderly in what time we live, their eyes light up: it is the end of August already. Sunday is the first of September. It is Labor Day weekend. College football is beginning, the U. S. Open tennis tournament is being played in New York, NASCAR racing is Sunday night in Atlanta—yeah, Ricky Stenhouse is on the pole and Bobby Labonte is out because he broke three ribs in an accident Wednesday—not going 200 miles an hour around a little track but RIDING HIS BICYCLE!

Richard has the tennis on (maybe that is more for Ethel ☺), Helen is from Philadelphia and talk of football brings Penn State to mind and the legendary Joe Paterno “such a kind and giving person,” and Florence Dauffenbach is immediately back on the court herself—until the other players got so fast and she couldn’t keep up. I know Ruth is pulling for Novak Djokovic. Powerhouse Georgia heard Clemson shout back, “This is OUR house.” And Bill and Art anxiously await the big race.

Folks, Jesus has brought you hear into the church, to be His holy Bride, as He cries out to all who would molest you, to world and Satan and sickness and death and sin and fear and guilt, THIS IS MY HOUSE. Here Jesus keeps you with His perpetual mercy and helps you from all things hurtful, giving you all that is profitable for your salvation. Here we pour out our hearts for one another, for our spouses and moms and children and grandchildren, for our neighbors and friends and acquaintances—and Jesus hears us and blesses us.

As we listen to the Gospel this morning, we find ourselves in Jerusalem by the HEALING WATER’S EDGE. But that healing water is not the Pool of Bethesda that the sick, lame man has been trying to reach for how many years. Like so many self-help books and ideas that clamor for your money today and like so many theologians of glory who declare that if you

will only give yourself to Jesus, He will give Himself to you, THE MAN SICK FOR 38 YEARS was seeking a delusion. There was no power in the pool of Bethesda. Those who entice you: send your check today to keep Jesus' ministry going for you: because the more you give, the harder you try, the deeper your commitment, the greater blessing you will have; are preaching the same thing.

St Paul tells us in Romans 10, Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

And if you doubt that good news, Paul adds, "For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.'" Let the Word of God be the basis for your confidence, not anything you can do, have done, or ever will do. The Sabbath day LAW reaches its fulfillment in Jesus' coming. "Take up your pallet and walk." Yes, on the Sabbath!

The Sabbath was established to point to and make known the Savior of the world, that in resting on the Sabbath the people of God might be forever aware of His way of salvation: through the promise and coming of your saving Bridegroom Jesus Christ: by grace through faith in Him, not of works.

Not working on the Sabbath pointed to the coming work of Jesus Christ on the cross for the salvation of the world, who would labor and carry our sins and suffer and die—and, on the Sabbath, rest in the tomb to RISE on the day of the New Creation.

Jesus Christ is the END of the LAW for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Therefore on this particular Sabbath, it is time to show that the Sabbath has been fulfilled. Jesus is our Sabbath Rest. Therefore, it is working by taking up your pallet that would make known and glorify Jesus—because this man had been utterly unable to carry his pallet. On the contrary, every day someone would need to carry him, such was his helplessness.

In Jesus the Water's Edge has come to you, to heal and save you. He is the Water of Life, the Pool of Bethesda who is a real "House of Mercy," as that name declares. You are in Jesus' house. At Jesus' word, the man was healed and took his pallet and walked. At Jesus' word your sins are forgiven and your troubles are taken into His care. At Jesus' word His own body and blood are given to you in His holy Supper so that you share in the New Covenant in His blood, the forgiveness of sins. In your eating and drinking of the sacrifice once offered on the Altar of the Cross, you are sealed with Jesus' righteousness and His life from the dead and His victory over death and the devil are yours. For you now dwell in the House of the Lord.

Deb and I with her parents and family took comfort in Psalm 36 this week, which describes Jesus' house and in a very interesting way ties in the place water has in it:

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!  
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.  
They feast on the abundance of Your house,  
and You give them drink from the river of Your delights.  
For with You is the fountain of life;  
in Your light do we see light.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.