



Sunday of the Paralytic

Today's passage has often been understood as Christ healing a "sick" man, the paralytic. If understood in this way, it points to our healing in Christ. However, the Greek word used for sick, ἀσθενέω, actually means "weak." This actually makes a lot of sense. Scripture is about how God usurps earthly power, especially when the kings abused their power, to care for the weak and underprivileged. Here, by word alone, Jesus empowers the paralytic and he receives his freedom to pick up his mat and walk.

Scripture: John 5:1-15

Bottom Line: God's Word still empowers us to turn our weaknesses into strengths.

Discussion Questions

1. The "five porticos" are a symbol of the Five Books of Moses. Since this is a place of healing, what does this symbolism tell you about the importance of Scripture? What does it say about the role of Scripture in our healing? What does it say about how the Gospel demonstrates the power of God?
2. Even though the man wanted to be healed by being put into the water, Jesus heals him by his word alone. Why do you think that is? What does this say about us, who also hear the same "word" spoken when the Gospel is read?
3. The Greek word for paralyzed, ξηρά, means "dry." It's the word used by Ezekiel for the "dry bones" that God brings back to life. What connection do you see between this "paralyzed" man and God resurrecting the "dry bones"? What connection do you see between God speaking and life?
4. The 38 years that the man was "sick," is symbolism for the years the Hebrews spent in the desert after being freed from Egypt. What sorts of deserts do you walk through in our life? How does God walk in the "desert" with you demonstrating his power?

Moving Forward

The authorities, in today's passage, had used the Sabbath as a way of asserting their power over the underprivileged paralytic. Jesus shows us that the Sabbath was meant for us to continue God's work of loving and caring for his people and creation. What can you do this week to empower someone in your live who is "sick" and in need of a friend to bring him or her to healing waters?

Changing Your Mind

"But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working'." (John 5:17)