

The Jesus Series: Wholeness in God

Sunday, July 1, 2018

John 5:1-14

One way to describe stress is calling it the gap between your hopes and your reality. You hope or expect that circumstances will go a certain way, and then they turn out much different. This could be long term hopes, related to career or parenting or life direction. Or this could be short term hopes, like how you hoped the meal you cooked would turn out, or how you planned your day to go. And the gap between hope and reality is often stress filled tension that manifests itself in anxiety, frustration, sadness, and sometimes apathy. This week for me - was filled with some days where hopes did not meet reality. And I found myself toward the end of the week dealing with manifested stress, battling lethargy, and struggling to not take this out on anyone else in our home. So what do we do when we find ourselves at that point in our day, or week? How do we respond to the stress of unmet expectations?

John 14:27 Jesus said **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.** As we have been reiterating in this series, this bible is not just a book of letters and numbers; It is the spirit-born word of God that became flesh and dwelt among us. So what has been written is all ABOUT Jesus AND is intricately tied to His person. So when you draw close to this text, in a mysterious way, you draw close to the person of Jesus. And in the person of Jesus, you have peace. The word of God brings us to the Son of God who gives us peace in God. **Peace** - in the biblical sense - is not just the absence of conflict; where Jesus takes something away. But it is something that he gives us. **Peace** - the Greek word (I-Ray nay) **Eirene**, (**Shalom** in Hebrew) - was a common Jewish phrase that means **every kind of blessing and good; wholeness in God**. The peace Jesus gives is this sense of ultimately ALL is ok with my life. And this is reality **not** because all our hopes and expectations are fulfilled all the time; but because even when they are not fulfilled, and the stress hits - we have a PERSON who lives to give us **wholeness**. *That may sound strange to you. My word processor underlined the word lives in red, to tell me it should be something else. Even google thinks this cant possibly be right. But...yes PEACE comes because Christ lives to give us wholeness, Peace in God. Hebrews 7:25, He [Christ] is able to save [to rescue, to preserve safe and unharmed, to heal] to the uttermost [perfectly, completely] those who draw near to God through Him, since [so everything that was just said is predicated on what comes next] he always lives to make intercession [to plead the cause of] for them.* Not only is it true that the person of Christ lives today to give you wholeness in God; but the very salvation of your life, your soul, depends on HIS ongoing faithfulness. He pleads our case continually before God, so that we have peace in God, and that is why He is able to rescue and preserve us completely (in ALL trials, in ALL unmet hopes and expectations - long term or short term). Salvation is first and primarily about rescuing us from God's wrath against sin and reconciling us to relationship with Him. And then that salvation permeates every facet of our life, including day to day stresses of this world. The rescue of Christ of your life is NOT a one time occurrence or decision that you made; it is not something he did in the past alone; your salvation is dependent on his continual work of making you whole.

The safest conception . . . that we can have of the intercession of Christ . . . is his continual appearance for us in the presence of God. Three things, [are involved in this intercession]: (1) The presentation of his person before the throne of God on our behalf (2) The representation of his death... and sacrifice for us; which gives power, life, and [effectiveness] to his intercession (3) [Intercession involves prayer] A requesting and offering unto God, of his desires and will for the church, attended with care, love, and compassion. John Owen

There is no religion in the world, outside of the Christian faith, that teaches that the deity of their religion lives to pray for his followers. Christianity is not a religion of rule keeping that you might please God; but it is a religion that says ALL that needs to be done to please God was completed by His son on your behalf; and that His son even now lives to pray for you that you will have wholeness in His Father. That wholeness may come as He changes our circumstances to cause our reality to meet our hopes. Or that wholeness may come as He sustains us in our circumstances and use them to draw out of us worldliness to prepare us for His future purposes. So whether He changes the circumstance right away or not - He points us to find wholeness in Him immediately. So I want to encourage you that the way we respond to the stress of life of unmet expectations is to Seek the person of Christ through the word that is all about Him. Do not demand upon him what your peace must look like; **receive from Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine according to his power than is at work within us.** He is not far from you. He sees you. He comes to you. He knows you. He has compassion on you. And He will give to you every kind of blessing and good; In Him you will have wholeness. And if God will give us eyes to see and ears to hear, this is the truth that can come alive to us in **John 5. (Pray)**

John 5:1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. It is likely some time has passed that John skips over in his account; activities in and around Galilee that are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John now picks back up as Jesus again heads south to Judea. **John 5: 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.** John describes a location that was apparently well known in the day of Jesus; A pool called Bethesda which may mean *House of Mercy*. Excavations near this site show evidence of two pools (spring fed) that were surrounded by 4 covered colonnades, with a 5th colonnade separating the two pools. And there was surrounding these pools, a multitude of sick people - blind, lame, and paralyzed. Now, you may have noticed that as we read - there was no verse 4. *Some of you are noticing it right now.* That may or may not interest you. If you have a KJV or an NASB, verse 4 is there. If you have an ESV or a NIV, the verse is in the footnotes. The reason for that is here is some question whether or not that verse was part of what John originally wrote in his gospel; most likely a scribe added that note in a margin later on, to try and explain the belief in that day about the pool of Bethesda. Verse 4 says this, ***“for an Angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had”***. Whether verse 4 belongs or not, it does not change any important Christian doctrine. It at most explains the thought of the day, that the water would sometimes get stirred up - most likely a natural phenomenon from the spring - and that people believed it was an Angel doing this, and IF they could get into the water quickly they were healed. We do not know if healings

actually took place at this pool, and if so - the nature of them. We simply have an idea of why a multitude of sick people have gathered there.

What we do know, is that Jesus purposefully went to this pool; to this gathering place of the sick.

5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. **6** 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?" **7** 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." **8** Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." **9** And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. **10** 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." **11** But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" **12** They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" **13** 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.

I hope you can see some connections in the stories that John has recounted for us. Jesus travels to various places where there are multitudes of people, and in each one he interacts with a single person, leading to profound results. Why did he go to Jerusalem earlier in John? Nicodemus. Why did he go to Samaria? To meet the woman at the well in Sychar, through whom many would be saved. Why did he go back to Galilee, knowing he would be dishonored in his hometown? For the Royal Official, that he might draw out of him false faith, give him true faith, and save his entire household. And why did he go to this pool? I submit to you that he went for this one man. There are perhaps hundreds of sick people there and we have no record that Jesus healed anyone else. He sovereignly focuses on this man, he singles him out. This guy did not look for Jesus; He had no understanding or faith in Jesus of any kind. Jesus goes only to him, and he heals him, and then he withdraws. The work of Christ for you is intentional. He sees you. He pursues you. You are not a face in the crowd; you are not just part of a group that he came to save. He has not come for the crowds, he has come for the individuals. He came **to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10)**.

Now verse 6 says Jesus knew that this man had been there a long time. This KNEW indicates a divine knowledge, much like Jesus had of Nathanael in John 1 and of the Samaritan woman in John 4. And He asks this man if he wants to be healed, which was obvious. For 38 years (which was around the average life expectancy of an adult male in that time), this man was an invalid. His expectations of being healed were not met by his reality. He was probably frustrated, anxious, depressed. His hope was in the stirring of this pool, but Jesus goes to him and intends to refocus that trust to himself. Jesus knew his story, his circumstance, everything and He had compassion on him. The work of Christ for you is intentional and it is personal. He knows all about you. He knows your hopes. He knows your reality. He knows the stress in that gap. And he has great compassion toward you. Jesus said to the sick man **"Get up, take up your bed, and walk"**. Jesus, *the Logos, the Dabar*, the word of God spoke and he was healed. He did not limp, this was not a gradual healing. He got up, and had the strength to roll up his mat, carry it on his shoulders, and walk away.

Jesus did all of this on the Sabbath, on purpose, which is something we may attempt to address next week. But look at **14** **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."** Some speculate that this may mean that this man's illness was directly tied to unrepentant sin; which could be true. (Expound a bit on unrepentant sin). But here is what we can say with certainty: Jesus is not primarily concerned with external healing. Notice that Jesus seeks out this man, a second time. Why? Because circumstantial help and external healing alone is not wholeness. Jesus shows us clearly that if we only care for someone's physical condition, with no concern for their soul to be saved - then we do not truly love them. Jesus has not come to simply better your temporal circumstances, although in His grace He does that often. The work of Christ is intentional, personal, and it is purposeful. God purposes that His miraculous intervention should lead to personal holiness. He makes your soul well, that you may sin no more. He pursued this man, that he might have more than just temporary physical healing.

What is the "**worse thing**", that could happen to this man? What is worse than 38 years as an invalid? Eons and eons and eons in hell, separated from a Holy God by a never-ending state of rebellion. Jesus lives to make intercession for us **with** God the Father. Jesus saves us from the consequence of our sin; that consequence comes from God. His wrath is **revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (Romans 1:18)**. But Christ is able to shield us from that wrath. This was the Father's plan. The *love* of God rescues us from the *wrath* of God, in such a way that the *justice* of God is vindicated and the *glory* of God is exalted (Piper).

We all have stresses - unmet expectations and hope. And I do believe that God intervenes in those circumstances. I do believe that he provides miracles. But the 'worse thing' for all of us, would be to continue in our sin and the consequences of that sin. Which is why even his intervention in the temporal, is a means to sanctify you for the eternal. Jesus sees you. Jesus pursues you. He knows your hopes. He knows your reality. He has great compassion toward you. In Him you will have wholeness. He says to each of us, I have made you well - Sin no more.

He lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him. Not a one time drawing, but a continual drawing. The question is not so much, did you make a past decision for Christ? The question is are you continually drawing near to God through Christ so that he might give you His peace and make you whole?