

Many hospitals have been named “Bethesda” because of this event at the “Pool of Bethesda.” “Bethesda” is a Hebrew word that means “house of mercy.” Many lessons may be learned from our text, but this morning we want to consider

“LESSONS AT BETHESDA ON SIN AND SUFFERING.”

I.

**There is a relationship between sin and the suffering of the human body.** John records later, that when Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth, even His disciples asked whether the man’s blindness was caused by his sin or the sin of his parents (John 9:1-3).

This healing at the Pool of Bethesda is the only recorded miracle where the Lord implies that the man’s illness was a result of sin. Great healing had been given to this poor man. He is to show his gratitude to God by no longer serving sin. Jesus says in v. 14: “stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.”

Later in John’s gospel Jesus tells the woman taken in the midst of committing the sin of adultery to “stop sinning,” meaning that she must give up her adulterous activity (John 8:3ff.). We know that special sins result in certain diseases: drunkenness can bring diseases of the liver and the stomach; syphilis can cause blindness, and homosexual activity very often causes aids.

However, we must not assign a particular sin to every person who suffers from disease. In general the sickness we suffer as human beings in this world is a direct result of man’s fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Sin afflicts us all, with the many illnesses and weaknesses of our failing flesh.

But if physical weakness, disease, and death are a part of our inheritance as a sinful race since the fall of Adam, why should the Son of God even bother about our sufferings? We are getting what we deserve aren’t we? That’s the easy way for near-sighted man to look at it. But the second lesson taught at Bethesda is that

II.

**Jesus does not simply disregard our sufferings.** When Jesus came to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival, He didn’t go to see the *important* people of the city, but the *impotent* people. He went to “The Pool of the House of Mercy” – a sad place of human misery! Seldom does a busy and important person visit the hospitals in a large city. But Jesus does not simply disregard our sufferings.

The people gathered at Bethesda were literally “without strength” – “impotent.” They were blind, lame and had “dried out” paralyzed limbs. Apparently, healing came to those who could get into the water first while it was being supernaturally stirred up. Those who were the sickest and the weakest had to depend on others to carry them quickly into the pool.

When Jesus saw the man “lying there, and knew that he had already been suffering for a long time, He said to him, “*Do you want to be made well?*” Jesus took special notice of the poor man, even though He knew that if he healed him, the Jews would try “*to kill him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.*” (v. 16) But our Savior could not simply disregard this man’s suffering! Instead, Jesus singled him out from all the others who were physically suffering.

But if God does not simply disregard our sufferings, we might ask: “Why doesn’t Jesus heal me, like the man at Bethesda? Why doesn’t God heal my cancer or my crippling arthritis? The

answer lies in the third lesson at Bethesda. **For while Jesus does *not simply disregard our sufferings,***

III.

**Neither, does He regard them *simply.*** The Almighty Creator of all things always has the “Big Picture” in mind – from eternity to eternity! All of our experiences in this world, including our sickness and suffering, are part of His overall plan and purpose for us.

Fire-ant hills pop up in my yard. I poison them only because I have a short-range desire to protect myself and others from their bite. But our God has no need to harm us in any way in order to protect Himself. Neither is God surprised by our sicknesses and sufferings, as if they are caused without His knowledge by some other power. *He IS the Almighty!*

So, we should know that He never regards our sufferings “simply,” – **all by themselves.** Before they became part of our day-to-day experience, He planned to use our sufferings for our everlasting good! As Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: *“All things work together for good for those who love God, who are the called according to His” eternal “purpose.” (Rom. 8:28)*

Verse 14 shows us that the paralyzed man at pool-side was not seeking to be healed of his sin-sickness. He was not seeking his spiritual and everlasting good. He did not see Jesus as His Savior from sin! For when Jesus asked him if he wanted to be “made well,” the sick man answered, *“SIR, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”*

This man was simply focused on getting into the pool to be rid of his suffering! It never occurred to him that Jesus could do more than just help him into the healing waters.

**Do we do the same?** In our suffering and pain do we look to Jesus FIRST in His Word and in prayer to “make us well”? Or do we focus first on how we can get the best medical attention and step into the best “House of Mercy Hospital?” At times, don’t we also look to Jesus to give us what **we think** we need, when in fact, what we really need is Christ Himself?

If we are suffering financial stress, we may want God to give us a better job, when what we really need is to *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (Matt. 6). Maybe, I or a loved one suffers from a deadly disease, and we want the Lord to work healing as soon as possible so that we can enjoy this life. But above all, we need the reminder that this life will soon be gone, and we must learn to live *FOR* Christ before we live *WITH* Him forever!

Thankfully, Jesus does NOT regard our sufferings simply or separately from the rest of His saving concerns for us. Could it be that our Lord wants to use our sicknesses and suffering to strengthen our precious faith by which we lay hold of eternal life in heaven?

Do we realize that we are to seek all that He would give us? The Bible says that God is “able do more for us than we can ask or think!” As Christians we know that God has already freely given up His only Son to pay the price of hell for our sins. For this reason Paul asks, *“Shall He not also “freely give us ALL things”* that are truly good for us? (Romans 8:32) .

Jesus commanded the paralyzed man to *“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!”* And he did! Unbelief would have said, “I have been like this for 38 years. And you want me to just get up and walk? Impossible!” But the man believed! Jesus had done much more than simply take away his suffering! So it was with Job and with the Apostle Paul, as you heard earlier.

**So it is with us too! Just remember from Bethesda that Jesus never *simply disregards our sufferings, nor does He ever regard them simply.* But always in all things He is mercifully drawing us and others to Himself and to His Father in heaven! Amen.**