

Giving Hope to Hurting People **John 5:1-17**

Introduction:

Since the fall, corruption and death have entered and permeated this world, affecting the lives of all people (Romans 5:12). Because of sin, there are many people who are hurting – physical disability, guilt, abuse, depression, etc. As well, people are hurting due to their wrong choices, which the Bible tells us is by their own selfish desires (James 1:14-15). Every hurting person looks for hope. In our text, God provided hope at the pool of Bethesda (vs. 4). This obviously was a foreshadowing of the prophesied coming and restoration of Christ (Malachi 4:1-2). Simply put, people desire hope. This is why people turn to different things and make certain decisions. This is why people turn to drugs, false religion, hobbies, gangs, prostitution, alcohol, illicit sexual relationships, money, possessions, etc. They so desperately want to fill the void in their life with something they believe will be the answer or something they think can allow them an escape from the reality of their situation or circumstances. So, why do people pursue these things? As we have stated, people are looking for hope, but often it is misplaced.

The Focus:

- **As believers in Christ, we must give hope to the hurting. How?**
 - **Go where they are.**
 - **Care enough to ask questions.**
 - **Take time to listen.**
 - **Share the hope of Jesus.**

In our text, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to observe one of Israel's feasts (vs. 1). From the text, all we know is that Jesus was most likely heading to the temple, but on His way, He passed by the pool of Bethesda (vs. 2). It was on His way that He "saw" a man by the pool (vs. 6). So, what was the man doing there? From the passage, we are informed that at a certain time of year an angel would go down to stir the water of the pool, and whoever stepped in first after it was moved was healed of whatever disease they had (vs. 4). As stated, this was probably a foretaste of God's complete healing and reconciliation that He would provide to Israel. Isn't it interesting that Christ had somewhere to be, and it was a pretty important place to be (the temple), but still, He had time to go where the man was (vs. 6)? The man had no strength to come to where Jesus was, therefore, Jesus would have never encountered him had He went straight to the temple. Why was this? This man had no strength to get to the temple. We have to go to the hurting people; we cannot always expect them to come to us. In their lost condition, they may not have the strength to seek us. We have to seek them. We have to reach out to where they are.

After going to the man, Jesus did not focus or comment on the reason why he got into the condition he was in, but rather, He asked him a question that provoked a response. Jesus, understanding why people came to the pool, asked, "Will your health be restored?" And the weak, feeble man said, "Sir, I don't have anyone who can get me to the water and put me in

when the angel comes to move the water.” Having compassion on the man, Jesus said, “Get up, get your bed, and walk.” What an awesome approach. Christ never brought up the sin issue directly, but rather, He asked the man if he would find healing. In the same manner, we just need to engage people in conversation. We need to learn to ask questions. Asking questions helps you formulate a game plan from God’s Word as to how to minister to them and how to share God’s love. As you ask questions, you begin to learn exactly where people are and how you can guide them to the truth.

We can learn from Christ in that we should ask questions, but once we inquire, we should allow people time for a response. We must take time to listen. Taking time to listen provides us the time to build a profile of what the potential bridges and barriers are in another person’s life. God is relational. His gospel is relational. Our approach in ministering to others must be relational. So, what did Jesus do after He asked the question? He just let him talk, and Jesus just listened (vs. 7). Isn’t it amazing how Jesus asked a question and this man opened up to him, even though prior to this they were total strangers? Oftentimes, we get so in our head, thinking about all of the preconceived notions that people have and usually, we overthink it. A lot of people are lonely and will open right up if someone would show any sign of caring. This guy had nobody (vs. 7). Most of the time, we simply need to let people talk. You find out how you can really help somebody when you just listen.

Asking questions helps you find out where people are at spiritually. It provides you with a framework to pray and figure out the best way to reach them for Christ. Like all of us in our lost condition, this man needed something that he could not accomplish on his own. He needed help. In our weakness, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6). The impotent man had desire, but no strength. He had tried it on his own, but there was no healing and no peace. He had to get help outside of himself. He would need somebody who cared and had the power to help him. In the story, Jesus represents grace. Jesus does it all for the man, and immediately, he is made whole. He takes up his bed and walks; he is a new man (Ephesians 2:8-10). Religion says, “Do, walk, crawl, struggle, and strain, and then maybe you will be made whole.” Jesus says, “I will make you whole; now go, walk, and do.” There are many hurting people that are looking for answers and will gladly embrace the message of Jesus Christ if somebody will share it with them.

Response to the Sermon:

Pastor Dan’s message provides an awesome progression for evangelism and discipleship – go, ask, listen, share. How are you doing with this approach? What is Jesus moving you to do? We all know that we have been given God’s Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. Who has He prompted you to reach with the gospel of Christ?

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

If we are going to see people reached with the good news of Christ, we must first go to where they are (vs. 6). Being among the people will stir in us a love and passion to minister to them and share the love of Christ. If we go about our busy lives, doing that which is good, but not

what is best, we will find that we are having little impact on the lives of others. If we walk about with tunnel vision, we will see little to no transformation in people's lives.

Next, as we go, don't go with a preconceived idea of what you are going to say and do. Go ready to engage with others by asking questions (vs. 6). Questions enable you to create a portfolio of the person's life. They help you to identify things that you can use to make a connection with them and those things which have caused them to build walls, preventing people from helping them. Discovering these things, they enable you to better pray and devise a plan of how to minister to them.

Without doing this, we lose the relational aspect of the gospel. Without doing this, we may still speak truth, but truth which may not be the most relevant to their situation. Therefore, if we are going to take the time to ask questions, we must take the time to listen (vs. 7), which will equip us with information needed to address their needs and concerns best. Doing this will show the other person that we truly care for them. As well, it instills God's Word in our hearts, giving us confidence to provide people with the answers they need from God's Word (vs. 8).

1. Who is God asking you to engage with and reach with the gospel of Christ?
2. What are some ways that you can reach others?

Application Questions:

Jesus, the Son of God, was dedicated to the Father's will. He never did anything contrary to it. Therefore, from Jesus' example, we see that temple worship or traditional observances should never keep us from ministering to the needs of others. God is more concerned with the eternal destination of a person's soul and spirit than whether or not you make an appearance at the church house. The application for us today is that God's is less concerned about your Sunday attendance and more interested in how you represent him as His ambassador, ministering to people throughout the week.

1. Do you find that you have time to engage with those that are non-believers (vs. 1, 6)? If not, why not? Take some time to reflect on your days and week, think about opportunities to engage with others.

2. Are there places where people meet that you frequent that God has challenged you to minister to with the gospel (vs. 2-3)?

3. Oftentimes when engaging with others, Jesus asked questions. Look at the question Jesus asked in verse 6. What did Jesus focus on in this man's life to frame a question around? How does this apply to us when we ask questions?

4. Although we can't speak declarative words of physical healing like Christ (vs. 8), what can we tell others and guarantee them regarding spiritual life (Ephesians 2:1, 8-10, 13)?

Prayer:

- Pray that you would look around to see the needs that others have in their life (John 4:35; 5:6).
- Pray that you would listen more and talk less, speaking with wisdom and intentionality (James 1:19).
- Pray that the people you minister to would see their weakness in light of God's strength (Romans 5:6).