



✠ INTRODUCTION & WELCOME

Welcome - Thank you for joining us.

During our time together, whoever we are and wherever we are we will have the opportunity to pray to God, to hear His word and to worship Him.

In our service we will be reading from the Gospel of John chapter 5 – the account of the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda – the lame man is one of the characters St John one tells us about in order to help his readers understand something of Jesus perception , patience and power!

Yes, *God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem all who trust in his unfailing love!*

Our first hymn, Hear the Call of the Kingdom . . .

✠ **HYMN** Hear the Call of the Kingdom (*StF 407*)

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to*

*proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call . . .

Title: 'Hear the Call of the Kingdom'

By: Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend

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✠ PRAISE

God of yesterday, tomorrow and today,
we are children of the world you love and care for.

We praise you, heavenly Father,
for calling us into relationship with you.

We praise you, Lord Jesus,

for the power of your name and the protection of your prayers.
We praise you, Holy Spirit,
for your guidance and gifts that enable us to draw others to you.
For you are faithful in times of uncertainty,
strong when we are weak, the breath of all our being, the energy of all our doing
and the peace of all our resting. **Amen**

✝ CONFESSON

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:
fill us with your Spirit.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith:
fill us with your Spirit.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust:
fill us with your Spirit.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

- silence -

All: **Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy,
Lord have mercy.**

- silence -

To all and to each, where regret is real,
God pronounces pardon
and grants us the right to begin again.
Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

✝ ADORATION

Living God, we give you thanks and praise,
for you have made us and given us life,
you have redeemed us and set us free.

Loving God, we give you thanks and praise,
for you have found us and made us your own,
named us and called us 'Beloved'.

Accompanying God, we give you thanks and praise,
for you have promised to be with us always
and nothing can separate us from your love.
God, our God, we love you and adore you.

✝ BIBLE READING St John 5 v1-15 Jesus heals a lame man by a pool (NIV UK)

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. There a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralysed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, *'Do you want to get well?'*

'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.'

Then Jesus said to him, *'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'* At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, *'It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.'*

But he replied, *'The man who made me well said to me, "Pick up your mat and walk."'*

So they asked him, *'Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?'*

The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, *'See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.'* The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

✚ **REFLECTION** Perception, Patience and Power!

Introduction to our Gospel reading

Have you ever thought about all the different people

– the characters – that St John in his gospel introduces us to? There is quite a variety!

There is Nicodemus. Who has been described as 'very Jewish' - orthodox and guarded.

He is told by Jesus that head-knowledge is not sufficient. There is the Samaritan Woman.

She is chaotic in her private life, and somewhat clueless in her religion. However, she is ready to recognise Jesus,

and having realised who Jesus is – is quick to tell others about him.

Then there is the royal official. He is behind his usual sense of status and security - a

desperate father seeking help for his son. Jesus says he is to go home to see his son who is made well, and the official takes Jesus at His word,

and is wonderfully rewarded with the recovery of his son.

In our reading we met another character - another instance of St John helping his readers to understand something of the way in which Jesus comes along side men and women to meet with their variety of needs.

Setting the Scene

Let's set the scene.

There were 3 festivals that required Jewish men to visit Jerusalem.

- The Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread
- The Festival of Weeks (also called Pentecost)
- The Festival of Tabernacles.

St John tells us it was festival time

- but does not tell us which festival it was. We do know that it is the Sabbath day.

At Jerusalem, near the Sheepgate, which is in the North Wall of the city, there was water - a pool, where people went to seek healing. If there was movement in the waters – some people believed that this "stirring" of the water was the work of an Angel, and that

the first person to get in the pool when it happens would be healed. We read that there were many disabled people there - the blind, lame and paralysed.

Jesus enters the scene.

An encounter with a difference

Often the Gospel accounts are of people coming to Jesus - coming with their problems, questions or illnesses; but note that this is an event when Jesus sees the lame man and approaches him. Why do we think Jesus singled-out this particular man? He was, after-all, one of many in need at the pool that day! Was it simply that Jesus had *“learned that he had been in this condition for a long time.”* And it gets a bit stranger. Jesus asks the lame man a direct question – a question that at first seems a rather odd question: *“Do you want to get well?”*

Hang on a moment, the chap has been unable to walk for 38 years! Why would he not want to be well? It is perhaps the man’s response that gives us a clue as to why Jesus asked a seemingly odd question. He says: *“Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water gets stirred.”*

No, the man does not say that he wants to get well. Rather he complains that he has no one to help him into the pool. Someone else always gets there first . . . and so the years go by.

One Biblical commentator suggests that perhaps it suits the man to sit in the shade and watch the world go by, while others carry him back and forth supplying him with food and drink!

But Jesus cuts straight through the pathetic superstition of the stirring water and the man’s half-baked comments. Jesus says: *“Get up, pick up your mat and walk”*. And amazingly, after all the years, the man is instantly and completely cured!

The man has done what Jesus asked him to and after 38 years - he is no-longer an invalid! Yes, another miracle showing Jesus’ power! – but that is not the end of the encounter - it does not end there.

As the healed man walks through the streets of Jerusalem the account unfolds – he is carrying his mat! As a result the authorities accuse him of working on the Sabbath. Clearly absurd!

Rules, rules and obey orders

It helps to know that according to the Pharisees, carrying a mat on the Sabbath - was work and was therefore unlawful. It did not break an Old Testament law, but it broke the Pharisees’ interpretation of God’s command to *“remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”* (Exodus 20 v8). This was just one of hundreds of rules the Pharisees had added to the Old Testament law, claiming their human-made rules were equal in authority to God’s Word.

Back to account: What is the man’s reaction to the Pharisees accusation? Again he adopts the attitude of blaming someone else. Someone just healed him, and told him to carry his mat. So that’s what he is doing, carrying his bed on the Sabbath – it is not his

fault! He's just obeying orders – he is just doing what he was told to do. How many times have we heard that!

Moving on again - there is strange twist to the story. The man who has been unable to walk for nigh on 40 years is miraculously able to walk but he does not know the name of the person who has healed him!!

Returning to the four different characters

At the start we looked at 4 of the characters John presents to us. With each person – Jesus comes to the point. Nicodemus: His spiritual darkness. The Samaritan woman: Her shame and confusion. The Royal official: His very personal wretched circumstances. Now we are introduced to a long-term invalid, a man who is surly and truculent.

Was he a scrounger? He walks away from the person who has given freedom - freedom to live a normal life – and he does not even know the name of his healer!

How would you and I respond to such a person? He certainly does not look like the sort of person who is going to be a faithful follower of The Way.

In addition, we read that when Jesus comes across the man again, he warns him to change his inner attitude. Jesus knew all about both the man's physical needs and the needs of his heart.

But it seems the warning was not heeded - the man merely reports Jesus to the authorities. John is showing us that with these 4 very different individuals that Jesus has perception, patience, and power to help. He offers to release their seized lives and offers to set them free.

. . . and for us now?

As I conclude - 2 thoughts. Firstly.

The lame man who had not walked for 38 years - had been healed!

Yet the Pharisees were more concerned about their petty rules than the life and health of a human being. Their focus was not on the miracle rather they focused their attention on a broken rule, because to them the rule was most important!

Sometimes it is easy to get so caught up in our church rules and policies and traditions that we forget the real needs of the people. At these times of change in our church we need to ask are our guidelines for living - God-made or human-made? Are they helping people, or have they become needless stumbling blocks?

. . . and secondly.

After 38 years, the lame man had no hope of ever being healed. Are there times in our lives when we think that the situation we are in is hopeless - or how trapped we feel in our limitations?

God ministers to our deepest needs. God may have special work for you to do in spite of your condition, or even because of it. Many have ministered effectively to hurting people, because – through God's graciousness - they have triumphed over their hurt, situation or condition. Amen

✚ **HYMN** Knowing You, Jesus (*StF 489*)

All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

Title: 'Knowing You, Jesus

By: Graham Kendrick

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✚ **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

During our intercessions there will opportunities for your prayer.

Jesus Christ . . .

He came and lived in our world.

He offers now to come into the life of each person – that asks Him in.

He is coming again to the world - in power and glory.

Think of someone whose life is in turmoil, who is facing a time of change and who is not sure which way to go or where to find help or how to cope with tomorrow. Ask that Christ's coming may fill them with strength.

- Time of silent prayer –

Think of someone who is struggling to cope with the onset of illness or old age and looks back to unfulfilled dreams and broken promises.

Ask that Christ's coming may fill them with hope.

- Time of silent prayer -

Think of someone who is overwhelmed by the pressures and the responsibilities laid upon them;

someone for whom the expectations of parents, employers, society or themselves are becoming too much to bear.

Ask that Christ's coming may fill them with a sense of their own worth.

- Time of silent prayer -

Think of someone who came to your church for a number of years and now does not. They filled a seat, sung the hymns, listened to prayers and to preaching. Ask that Christ's coming may mean that for them nothing is ever the same again.

- Time of silent prayer -

Think of someone who thinks only of themselves, of their own wants and desires; someone who never sees the needs of their neighbour or blames them for being too weak. Ask that Christ's coming may soften their hearts.

- Time of silent prayer -

Think of a world leader facing huge decisions concerning a war, famine, environmental change, economic stability. Ask that the promise of Christ's coming again may turn hearts and minds to their Maker.

- Time of silent prayer -

Jesus Christ . . .
He came and lived in our world.
He offers now to come into the life of each person – that asks Him in.
He is coming again to the world - in power and glory.

Think of yourself, and all your life means.
Think of all your possess and all you have done.
Think of all it will mean in the face of eternity.
Think of your relationship now with your God.
Think of all you will face tomorrow.
Ask that Christ's coming and coming again will focus you daily on Him.

- Time of silent prayer -

Amen

We ask our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ who came to earth and provided an example of living, who offers now to come into lives - bringing salvation – and a right relationship with God who will come to earth – in majesty - for all to see.

✝ HYMN O Thou Who Camest from Above (StF 564)

O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!
There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return,
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up thy gift in me —
Ready for all thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat,
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.

Title: 'O Thou Who Camest from Above'
By: Charles Wesley
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✠ CLOSING, FINAL PRAYER & BLESSING.

A reminder that Thy Kingdom Come – May 26th - 5th June, that is Ascension and Pentecost - is a time when churches across our Methodist Circuit join the global wave of prayer for more people to come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ. Yes, let's join the thousands of Christians around the globe to light up the world in prayer!

Thank you for joining us for Digital Church.

If you would like to contact us details of how to do so will be on the final screen.

We pray,

now may we walk forward confident that Christ is beside us

as we journey today,

knowing the love of God around us

and the power of the Holy Spirit within us

and may the blessing of the Holy Three

be the gift that we freely give to others. **Amen**

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