

**~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:**

Obviously people were genuinely being healed when an angel periodically troubled the waters of the Pool of Bethesda: Otherwise there would not have been so many sick people waiting for the waters to move. I am of the persuasion that God, who periodically sent the angel, had more in mind than the occasional healing of one person. Israel's covenant with God included divine healing. He promised that if they would serve Him, He would "remove sickness" from their midst (Ex. 15:26, 23:25; Deut. 7:15). But, as Jesus lamented in 4:48, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." So God mercifully performs signs to provoke people to believe, and He sometimes heals people who have no faith. Those kinds of healings fall under the category of "gifts of healings" which operate as the Spirit wills (1 Cor. 12:1-11).

Those who lost the periodic race to the troubled waters of Bethesda should have been encouraged by every demonstration of God's healing power that occurred before their eyes. They should have wondered, "Is God trying to convey to us that He delights in periodically making all of us compete in a sickening race in which the majority of us come out as losers? Or is He trying to encourage us to believe that He is still in the healing business?"

One day, the God who periodically sent an angel to the Bethesda Pool showed up Himself in the form of Jesus---and healed one man. Should we conclude from this that it was not God's will for the others at the pool to be healed? That would be an unwarranted assumption in light of the many stories we've already read in the Gospels in which Jesus credited the faith of those He healed as being the reason for their miracle. Had they not had faith, they would not have been healed, even though it was God's will for them to be healed, as proved by the fact that He did heal them. All of this is to say that, if someone else is healed by God, it should encourage, not discourage, those of us who still need healing. If God forgives one person, is it right to conclude that the reason is because God singled out that person for forgiveness at the exclusion of others? Certainly not.

Another spiritual lesson from today's reading is that sin can open the door to God's judgment in the form of sickness. Jesus told the crippled man whom He had healed, "Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you" (5:14). The implication is that his former sickness was the consequence of his sin, and if he didn't repent, he might find himself suffering something even worse.

The ultimate lesson that everyone should learn from all those whom Jesus healed (and even raised from the dead) is that Jesus is the one who will one day heal everyone of whatever killed them when He resurrects their dead bodies. This is not just true for believers, but for unbelievers as well, as Jesus declared in today's reading. Note that those who will experience a "resurrection of life" will be those who did "good deeds" (5:29). Those who experience a "resurrection of judgment" will be those who committed "evil deeds" (5:29). We are saved by faith, but those who believe are characterized by good deeds.

Other scriptures teach us that not everyone will be resurrected at the same time. At the rapture of the church, all those who have died in Christ will be resurrected and given glorified bodies, as Christ has now. It won't be until the end of the millennial reign of Christ that the unrighteous will be resurrected to stand at the final judgment (Rev. 20:5).

How tragic was the blindness of the Jews who debated with Jesus and rejected Him, refusing to accept the testimony of Moses (5:45-47), John the Baptist (5:33-35), and the greatest testimony of all, that of God the Father, who endorsed Christ through His many miracles (5:36-37). The rejection of Him was due to their loving men's approval more than God's approval (5:44). May we never forget who is on the throne!