

Sermon John 5 1 9 6th S of Easter S C

Sermon: 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Text: John 5:1-9 (v. 7a)

Theme: A cry for help

Goal: To direct the eyes of the hearers to Jesus (not to other healing sources) and to the needy around us

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Several crippled were healed by Jesus. Maybe the most well-known story of this kind is of the paralytic of Capernaum, who was brought to Jesus by some friends. Unable to reach Jesus due to the crowd, “they went up on the roof and lowered the man in his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus” (Luke 5:19). This man had friends who took him to Jesus. And he had faith and was healed.

Totally different is the story of our Gospel: The paralyzed man didn't have anyone to help him, and he didn't even know Jesus! But he was also healed.

Do you have any friends to help you in your needs?

Are you a friend to someone who need your help?

I – Do you need help?

The man “had been an invalid for thirty-eight years”. Probably some of his relatives brought him to this place every day to beg and to get some money. As it happens nowadays, begging is a very lucrative activity for some. But nothing to compare to a healthy body, able to work and to get a decent job and earn his money. The only option this paralyzed man had was to beg.

When Jesus approach him at Bethesda, and realized that the man had been in this condition for such a long time, Jesus asked him,

“Do you want to get well?” Obviously the answer would be: “Yes, Lord!” But the focus of the man was somewhere else. The pool in front of him had miraculous power; and many were healed from time to time when the water stirred. Therefore, as an answer to Jesus’ question, the man could only complain: “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.” – Instead of looking to Jesus, the source of all healings, he was still looking to the water.

“I have no one to help me...” How many times our complain resounds these words? We are seated on our place, waiting for some help, looking somewhere far, and day after day nothing happens. We become so used and accommodated to our situation, that sometimes “38 years” pass and we are still there, complaining: I have no one to help me... We look around us, and many are in the same situation or worse than us. *“We often find ourselves looking for salvation in the wrong place, or at least in another place than the one to which Jesus points us. But though our eyes are cast in the wrong direction, Jesus has ways of showing up right in front of us, with his healing and love.* (Phil Brandt, p. 31).

We are Christians and we know Jesus. We trust in His love and in His power. But in some situations we don’t look to Him; we look to our problems and we are overwhelmed by them; we look to other solutions, ignoring the One who can really help. He is so close to us to help and to strengthen us. Maybe He will not perform a visible miracle as He did with the crippled man at Bethesda. But He says: “Get up” from your place! Don’t consume yourself complaining your fate!

Jesus came to the aid of this man, even though he didn’t know Jesus and didn’t have faith. This is very rare among the healings

Jesus performed. Faith was always required. But Jesus has His own ways to handle people. His love and His power helped this man, and after this Jesus had an opportunity to introduce Himself to the healed man when He met him at the temple.

Open your eyes to see how many times you had Jesus at your side and you didn't realize it at that moment... only later. Even when you said: "I have no one to help me..." I don't have a friend who stands by me... I'm alone... Jesus was there with you. He is always with us. We have to open our eyes and see Him in His Word, in the Holy Communion, in our Baptism. Or are we blind to this presence of Jesus among us? He is the One we need and who never goes far from us. Maybe we are far from Him... and we have to come closer to where He reveals Himself.

II – Are you helping anyone?

There is another way that Jesus comes to the aid of the needy. It is through us, His church, members of His body. After Jesus went back to Heaven on Ascension Day (we will remember this day on Thursday at our evening service), the disciples were in charge to do what Jesus had done: That is to preach the Gospel of forgiveness and love, and to help people in their needs. Are you helping anyone in need?

I read a story that during the Second World War a church was destroyed by bombs. Among the rubble, they found a statue of Jesus; but the hands and the feet were broken out. The priest saved the image. When the church was rebuilt, the statue of Jesus was put on its place again – without hands and without feet. The priest explained: This is to remind us what happened; and to tell us that we are the hands and feet of Jesus to walk around and to help the needy.

There is a little bridge in Beira, Mozambique, in the middle of a street market. Under the bridge just a little water runs, in the midst of tones of rubbish. The bridge is called: The bridge of the blind. I have seldom seen such a depressing scene. Dozens of blind people outreaching their hands and begging for some alms. There is no other way to go from one side of the street market to the other; you have to cross the bridge. I couldn't help all, but just one.

The Social Work with HIV/AIDS infected and affected children we supported in Kenya has a motto: "Help one, help all". *We should not let the number of needy people overwhelm us so that we help none* (ABC 1261). I know that it is difficult to give some alms to the man begging at the robot (red-light). We don't know if that person is really a needy one. Therefore, the church has projects and entities that we know are in need. Just now our brothers and sisters in Mozambique are starving due to the draught which is affecting South Africa as well. Pr. Inock is planning to go back to his family in DRC, and he doesn't have enough money for the transport and to take something with him to his family. Other entities are asking for our help as well.

Conclusion: Jesus still comes to our aid straight with His help, power and love. The fact that we are still alive and have our jobs and our daily bread is by God's grace. He asks us as he asked the crippled man: "Do you want to get well?" And then He says: "Get up!"

And Jesus comes to the aid of the needy through us, to share love and forgiveness, and to share the daily bread. Let us not hear from some one: "I have no one to help me." We are here to do God's will. Amen. Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 01 May 2016