

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

LORD OF LIFE ??

Ever witnessed a miraculous healing? Or heard about one? In John 5:1-30 today we go to the Pool of Bethesda, where Jesus encounters a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Midst a multitude of needy people, blind, lame, paralyzed - Jesus chooses this one. He says in verse 8, "**get up, take up your bed and walk**" And at once, instantaneous healing, just like the official's son in John 4.

But here there is no indication of faith, just a sovereign act of God's healing grace. Why? Jesus is Himself the ultimate healer, the Lord of Life. And just like every other healing in Scripture, the point is not the person healed, but the healer, Jesus. And this miracle, like the others recorded in John's gospel, are given as a sign that Jesus IS God.

However, it was the Sabbath. As the healed man cruises around the Temple complex, he gets nabbed by the religious authorities. No work was allowed that day, according to the 39 rules they added to God's Law. And they want to get the guy who healed him. Are we like these misguided zealots? Missing God's work because we're too self-absorbed in substituting our man-made traditions for God's truth and grace?

Jesus tells the man, "**See you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.**" What could be worse than illness and death? Eternal judgment. And Jesus has orchestrated events for this teachable moment. Instead of arguing how traditions must not overrule compassion and good works, He says in verse 16, "**My Father is working until now, and I am working.**" God rested from His creative works on the seventh day of creation, but not from His sustaining and redeeming works since then.

To Jewish ears, it was blasphemy for Jesus to call God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. But Jesus goes on with His defense, presenting His AUTHORITY to do all the Father instructs. He raises the stakes even more in verse 21, "**As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will.**" This echoes themes of John's gospel, and further adds to Jesus' claims to be God. He not only raises helpless people physically, but also SPIRITUALLY.

He underscores His authority to do so in verse 22, "**The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father.**" In their culture, a son would represent the authority of his father and do only what he authorized. But the religious leaders were incensed. Only God is judge, and Jesus is even claiming this divine prerogative. Blasphemy! But Jesus is saying, 'you would judge Me? Well, My voice that you now hear is the very one which will judge you in the end.' Perhaps they covered their ears at such blasphemy, and missed His next gracious words of life in verse 24, "**Truly truly I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.**"

Jesus declares this eternal life is NOW for all who believe in Him, and therefore also they will not be condemned on the last day. Jesus underscores this truth in verse 25, "**Truly truly I say to you, an hour is coming and IS NOW HERE, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.**" These words are fulfilled in their midst - as all who were dead in sins but now believe in Jesus were raised to eternal SPIRITUAL LIFE the moment they believed.

Then Jesus delivers the dramatic apex of His defense, verse 26, "**For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the SON OF MAN.**" With this title, taken from the prophets Elijah and Daniel, unmistakably Jesus claims further divine authority, making Himself equal with God. But there's more. In verse 28 He says, "**Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.**"

The gospel of John makes it clear: Those who have done good are those who have discarded all vain human attempts to save themselves, casting themselves on Jesus alone. Those who have done evil are those who have rejected Jesus as Savior and Lord. Which are YOU? Judged by your own words and works, or saved by trusting only and completely in Jesus - **and raised up by the Lord of LIFE?**