

Bible Study: Don't reject God's mercy

You will get more out of this study if you read the verses and ponder the questions several times a day. You'll also get more out of the study if you discuss it with others. Jesus says where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is there with them.

Monday 1 Peter 2:18-25 (NRSV)

Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

If you read a few verses earlier, you find this passage in 1 Peter is addressed to slaves. Do you think it applies to people today? Who?

This passage refers to Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. Isaiah 53:5 says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed." 1 Peter 2 echoes this, saying "by his wounds you have been healed."

Jesus was healing people before he died on the cross, so what do you think it means that by his wounds we have been healed?

Tuesday John 5:1-5 (NRSV)

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids--blind, lame, and paralyzed. . . . One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

Verse four, found in the footnotes of many Bibles, is in only some of the ancient texts. It adds a helpful explanation for those of us not familiar with the pool: "An angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had."

The pool was surrounded by blind, lame and paralyzed people who were hoping to be first into it, even though all of them had ailments that made getting into the pool difficult.

What do you think the setting was like?

*What are some similar places today, where people wait and hope for healing?
(If you think about this, you'll be able to create a long list.)*

Wednesday John 5:6-7 (NRSV)

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me."

Jesus asks a straightforward question, but the man does not answer directly. Instead of telling Jesus that he wants to be well, the man gives an excuse why he hasn't been healed yet: he hasn't been able to get to the pool first.

How much do you make excuses to God for your broken condition?

How much do you tell God what you really want for yourself and the world?

Thursday John 5:8-10 (NRSV)

Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."

The man was completely healed for the first time in 38 years, but there's not much time for celebration in this story! The Jewish leaders did not ask the man why he was carrying the mat. Maybe if they had, they would have celebrated the man's amazing healing. Or maybe not.

How much do you celebrate with people who have breakthroughs?

Friday John 5:11-16 (NRSV)

But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.

The leaders knew the rules: no working on the Sabbath. It didn't matter if someone was healed for the first time in 38 years. If it happened on a Sabbath, it was wrong.

*What do you do on your day of rest?
(You do take one, don't you?)*

Saturday John 5:16-19 (NRSV)

The Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise."

Are you inclined to help the people you notice or to take a break once in a while from helping others?

How To Be A Christian (in four easy steps)

- 1) Talk to God about what's up.*
- 2) Do whatever God tells you.*
- 3) If you don't hear anything specific, do anything Jesus told his followers to do.**
- 4) Repeat.*

**Jesus told his followers lots of things, but here's a reminder of the basics: 1) Love God with everything you've got. 2) Love those you see in need in the same measure as you love yourself. (Ways Jesus taught his followers to love people were to announce good news to the poor, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and raise the dead.)*

*What needs of the world do you want to talk to God about?
What are you hearing God tell you?
When will you take action?*

For more great Bible Studies, go to <http://www.LaJollaLutheranChurch.com>

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV), copyright, 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.