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SERMON TITLE: "Finding Jesus ... or Did Jesus Find You?"

SCRIPTURE: John 5:2-18

DATE: March 4, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ JOHN 5:2-18 and ECCLESIASTES 3:1-4, 11, 16-17

Who is Jesus? Would it help you to know? Sometimes you can love someone more if you know who they really are. Knowing is helpful with trusting. It's easier to trust someone you know.

Think about your life, your history, and your relationships. How would it feel if Jesus said, "I know this about you."? Sometimes it would be good!

Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Here is a man of no deceit!" "How did you get to know me?" he replied. "I saw you," Jesus said. This felt really good! He was awestruck.

To the Samaritan woman Jesus said, "You've had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband."

Ouch! Sometimes being known is embarrassing. But, that knowledge Jesus had about her is exactly what drew the woman to Him.

Last week Angel Kezar shared a poem that stated:

*For to be known is to be loved,
And to be loved is to be known.¹*

We all want to be known.

Our story today takes place in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate, at the Bethesda Pool, where people often got healed.

Bethesda בֵּית הַחֶסֶד means "house" (bet) of "mercy, kindness, goodness" (hesed). Hesed is the term that God often uses to define himself.

So the pool was known as a place of mercy or kindness which all points to its healing powers. But for the paralyzed man it must have felt like, *yes for others, but not for me*. He saw himself as excluded because he had no help and no ability on his own.

Do you ever feel like aspects of Christianity are not for you? You don't have the ability you need or no one cares or there is some problem with you, thus it is for others, but not extended to you.

This man had been this way for thirty-eight years and Jesus noticed him that day. Right away Jesus saw him lying there and "knew he had been there a long time."

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Jesus knew him and thus engaged the man in conversation.

Let's imagine ourselves at the pool. We may not be paralyzed in the physical sense, but we might very well be paralyzed in another sense. There might be something in your life that makes you feel excluded. Perhaps it is the past or some habit you have or some shortcoming by which you define yourself. Jesus walks up to you. You find yourself just as paralyzed, as he asks, "Do you want to be made well?"

"I want to but I can't erase the past."

"I want to but I have this shortcoming."

"I want to but I'm addicted to _____."

"I want to but I'm mad about something that happened and cannot get over it."

I bet that paralyzed man had prayed and prayed about his situation. I bet he might have even asked others to pray for him.

"I've prayed and prayed and prayed Jesus, but nothing happens."

Hesed (חֶסֶד) is total mercy which is not dependent on who you are or what you have done.

Jesus exercised hesed (חֶסֶד) and healed the man.

He was so excited about the answer to his prayer that the man just took off and started walking around, carrying his mat. He forgot to thank Jesus; he forgot to say, "Who are you?" He was on his feet and all his problems seemed to be solved.

¹ Chris Kinsley and Drew Francis, *A Woman of No Distinction*, 2007.

Do you think that if Jesus would just exercise “hesed” about your paralyzing problem your life would be just fine?

I sure you do because I do too. I would love to have some things erased from the past, and some personal shortcomings disappear and some anger wiped away forever! Who wouldn’t?

After Jesus exercised “hesed” toward the man, the Jews cornered the man and said, “Who did this for you?”

The man didn’t know! He didn’t hang around Jesus long enough to even take a look; he was so excited he could think of nothing else.

Jesus understood. He knew the problem, though. He knew he had more work to do with this man. Leaving him this way would leave him still in bondage. So later, Jesus again sought him out.

Jesus found the man again.

How many times have you begged Jesus to help you, and he did. Then you forget all about him!

But to relate to Jesus only for help with a particular problem is to miss the greater healing. The greatest healing is to know God. To know God is to be known by the God who loves us.

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I have a friend who was in debt. She begged God to help her get out of debt. God soon gave her a wonderful job that paid really well and she paid off all her debts. She continued to work really hard, day and night, all week and Sunday too, until she had racked up quite a bank account.

But she wasn’t going to church or spending time in the Word or fellowshiping with her Christian friends or any of that because of the job. One day she heard a voice speak this to her:

“And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?” (Matthew 16:26)

In the same way, Jesus spoke to the man: “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you” (Jn 5:14).

Did Jesus mean that if you sin, then you get sick? That doesn’t seem fair!

Once the disciples asked Jesus that very question. When they saw a man who was blind from birth, they assumed that the parents or the man had sinned. Jesus said, “No, his blindness was not from his or his parents’ sin.” (see John 9:1-5)

So Jesus did not say ‘do not sin’ or you will get another disease. Jesus knew the man had a much greater problem.

Jesus knew the man needed more than physical healing. Yes, the body is important and we are instructed to always pray for healing. But Jesus knows that the greatest handicap is to not know God.

You can have loss, or a checkered past, or a body that frustrates you with its shortcomings, but the greatest problem is sin. Sin keeps you from eternal life. John says sin is actually rooted in unbelief—so we must believe; we must commit our lives to Jesus because Jesus is the only one by his “hesed” who can remove sin.

Without knowing Jesus as God’s Son, you are in trouble, because Jesus is the only way to eternal life.

That’s why the Jews were struggling. They did not believe in Jesus; they were rule keepers. Paul writes:

“A true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God’s Spirit. And a person with a changed heart receives praise from God. (Romans 2:29)

This was a big change. Like Ecclesiastes says, there is a time to tear down and a time to build; a time to plant and a time to uproot. The change opened the way for Jesus’ gift of life and light to come to us—John keeps returning to this!

Do you have the light and life that comes from following Him?

Let us not seek Jesus for physical healing alone, but go for the true healing of knowing and being known by Jesus. That’s relationship that lasts forever.

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AMEN