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## JOHN 4:28-54, 5:1-18

John Series

What's helpful for me in my own spiritual experience as I'm studying the scriptures is to try to put myself in the story of what's happening so that I can kind of experience it a little bit more.

I wonder in this story about the woman at the well that we talked about last week, what happened to her? What happened to her after the story? Because we don't know. We know that she left the well without her water jug, but she had this living water inside, this fountain inside of her heart that did something to her enough so that she would tell people about Jesus. And they all wanted to come out and see her. I wonder though, do you think she got married to that guy she was living with? I don't know.

I don't know how it changed her, but I know that God changes people and you just have to wonder in the lives of people. I know you probably know someone who's like the woman at the well, investing in something that's not producing the hope that she thought it would be. She's investing in relationships with guys and finally gives up on that. She doesn't even marry the last guy, she's just living with him. You know people like that who've given up, they just don't have the hope, and Jesus is the answer. That's what this woman found out.

If you look at verse 28 of John 4 it says, *Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*

Now we enter into a parentheses in the story because the disciples have something important that they need to learn. Verse 31 says, *Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."*

Jesus has done this on a number of occasions already where He uses something physical to illustrate something spiritual. But the people he's talking to don't get it yet. And that's what He's doing here.

*Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."*

So they come and they say to each other, “Did He get some food from someone else? Did someone bring Him some food while we were out shopping?” And Jesus’ point is He wants to illustrate something about the spiritual sustenance that we have and really the satisfaction, the satisfying need.

I love to eat. It’s one of my favorite things to do. And I’m satisfied after I’m done eating. It’s great. But there’s something more satisfying than food Jesus is saying and that is serving the Father. He’s describing that here.

He uses this illustration of the harvest. He says, “You have a saying that said,” and the saying is basically that you reap now and in four months you’ll have the harvest. That’s the saying and it’s a reminder to everybody who’s a planter to invest. Better get out there and work! If you want food in four months you better go out and do that now! So the saying that they had reminded them of four months later is a harvest.

But the point Jesus is saying is look right now. Just open your eyes. Look at all these people who are coming out of the city right now. The harvest is ready. If I were sitting there next to Jesus and seeing the people coming out, my heart would just be so touched by that. As I am now when I see someone who comes to Jesus and is spiritually hungry and I say, “Wow. The harvest is ripe.”

We tend to think when we look at the crowds, we look at people, we say, “Wow. I don’t know if they’re ever going to get it.” But when we start to get past the barriers that people have in their lives and we see what’s going on, we see people hungry for the truth.

Our job is to be the one sharing. That’s what He’s saying here. The people that are spiritually lacking, they need the message of salvation. It’s our job, it’s our opportunity to share that message with them. God’s already done the plowing, He’s already done the sowing. Many times we come in and we are able to share the gospel and people respond to it. That’s what He’s saying.

Verse 39: *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him (why?) because of the woman’s testimony.* Now that’s going to change in a minute. I want you to see that. *Because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”*

*So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.* What an amazing two days that must have been to be with Jesus. He stayed with them for two days in that Samaritan village, interacted with them, talked to them. And notice verse 41 – *And because of his words many more became believers.*

That’s often the case for us that we share the gospel with people and some people become Christians because they’re attracted to us and they’re attracted to the light that we shine. But then after they get to know Jesus a little bit more it’s something that’s self-perpetuating. It doesn’t depend on me and my testimony; it’s something that God is doing in their life and God works in them. So many more came as the result.

Now in this Samaritan village people have come to Jesus. This is going to set the stage for the revival that's going to take place in Acts 8 when Philip we know and is a speaker at the revival ceremony or the revival meetings in Samaria. This is all setting the stage for that and that's going to take place in Acts 8.

Let's go on in the story now in John 4 to verse 42. *They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."*

They came to that conclusion themselves to recognize that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Isn't that what we pray for our friends, for those that live in our homes, those that we come in contact with, the people that we interact with? We pray that they'll come to that conclusion that Jesus is the Savior of the world and that's what happened here. They lived with Jesus for two days. He lived among them during that time. And we'd gone in the story from Jesus just being a Jew, as it mentioned first, then to being like Jacob, and then to "sir" she calls Him, now He's the Savior of the world.

It's remarkable what's happening here because in this story Jesus doesn't do any outward miracles. He's not turning water into wine. He's not healing anybody on the outside. He doesn't produce a fountain of water that everybody doesn't have to draw from the well anymore. What He does is He does something inside of people's hearts. That's the miracle that He does. There's no outward miracles talked about in this story, but people are coming to Christ because of what's going on inside. It's a little different than later on in chapter 5 where they look for a miracle, which is a contrast seen there.

Let's go onto verse 43. *After the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.)* That's in parentheses in my Bible. Maybe it is in your Bible too. But I want to stop there for a moment because that statement is mentioned in three of the gospels. Three times Jesus makes this statement. What does it mean?

Let me read it again. It says, *Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.* See, He's from the tribe of Judah, so down in Judea where Jerusalem is. He was born in Bethlehem, a little south of Judea. That's where He's from. He grew up in Nazareth which is in Galilee. But He's talked about Judea where He's not really welcomed. He's been challenged by the chief priests there, by the religious leaders, and they're not honoring Him. That's what He's referring to.

The statement is mentioned in three of the gospels. I think a very interesting application for us in our own lives. Let me show you one of the other gospel passages. In Mark 6:4 here's the quote there. Look at this with me. In Mark 6:4 it says, *Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home."*

You know what that tells me? It tells me that honor is most difficult in the home, in your own town, in your own workplace. We often treat strangers with more kindness, with more grace than we do those who live in our own home. Which reminds me and I think the takeaway for all of us is that we need to go overboard. We need to look for extra ways to show honor within our home.

Because the tendency is to not do that. We don't put up with it. Somebody makes a smart remark and we're on them really fast. We don't give people honor like even the other people that are strangers to us.

This is such a powerful verse. It's really the basis for a book that Joanne Miller and I wrote called – forget the title of the book because the book's title distracts from the meaning of honor, but the whole idea of honor is so important. The whole book is about honor. How do you bring honor into the family. It comes from this idea that honor is hard to do at home. It's easier to do outside, but even Jesus as a prophet is not without honor except in His home town, except with His relatives and in His own home.

I would just suggest that our takeaway is that we need to work harder. We need to work harder to demonstrate honor at home and to practice it.

He wasn't received in Jerusalem so He's going to leave and He's going to go down to Galilee.

*Verse 45: When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there.*

When they were at the Passover Festival there were a lot of people from all over the place. Some of those people were from Galilee. And Jesus, being now from Galilee, He was there. He's a Galilean and He's there and He was at the Passover. Remember He's doing some amazing things like getting rid of the money changers, overturning the tables.

I think the Galileans were rather proud of the fact that one of their own had been up at Passover. Because really if you look at the culture of the day it was kind of in Jerusalem it was the elite people, the educated people, the people who were very religious were in Jerusalem. The people down in Galilee were the rural people. They were the farmers. Can anything good come out of Nazareth is the idea that they would say later on. There's this sense of lower class of some kind. So now Jesus is making a splash in Jerusalem? They're kind of proud of that, so they're welcoming Him in the midst of that.

Let me show you the geography of the land here. Here we have Jerusalem and then up here we have Galilee is up in this area. Samaria is in the middle and Judea's down here. So we have three parts of the country that are west of the Jordan River. We have Judea, Samaria, and we have Galilee. Here's Nazareth, here's Hama, which we're going to talk about, and here's Capernaum at the top cap. You think of cap of the Sea of Galilee. That's the geography of where we're headed here.

*Verse 46 says, Once more he visited Cana in Galilee. Remember Cana was the place where he had turned the water into wine. So He went back there and visited there. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. Twenty miles away. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.*

This is not the ruler of the synagogue who's going to come with a similar need later. This isn't the centurion who's going to come and ask for healing for the servant. This is a guy it says he's a *royal official*. He's probably related to Herod, probably is wealthy. This is someone who had a lot of prestige probably. He was a royal official. That's who he is.

But his son is sick. It's amazing how when you're in some kind of a sickness it just levels the playing field. When you're close to death it levels the playing field. When you're in a funeral and someone has died, whether you're a big shot or a little shot, we're all together. It just levels the playing field for us.

Here's a guy who's hurting. He's got a son who's very sick. This guy isn't a Jew. He's got a lot of money. Probably spent money already on physicians and he's heard about Jesus. There's a slimmer of hope, so he goes the twenty miles. Twenty miles – probably take a half a day if you're in a hurry, if there's a sense of urgency. He goes the twenty miles to get to Cana where Jesus is.

Notice it says in verse 47 *he begged him*. There's a sense of hopelessness. His son is at stake. He loves his son. You can imagine him probably sitting with his son at night, through the night sitting with his son who's very sick. Doesn't know if he's going to live or die. He's just oh it's a painful experience. So he comes to Jesus who's a carpenter's son. He's not a royal official; He's just a carpenter's son. He's stepping down in humility and he's begging Jesus to come and heal his son. I suppose he would've brought the son with him if he could. The son's probably too sick to move, so he left the son. He's on a mission, he goes to Jesus, and he pleads with Jesus, "Would you please heal my son?"

Verse 47: *When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.*

Verse 48, Jesus' response: *"Unless you people see signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."*

Now the word *you* is plural there which means He's talking to the crowd. Jesus is saying to the crowd, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will never believe." Unlike the people in Samaria. They didn't need signs and wonders. They responded to the message.

Again just a message for us. There's a temptation for us to look for the signs and wonders and for our spirituality measured by experience. I'm feeling good today if God's doing good things in my life – wow I'm excited and my spirituality is high. But if things aren't going well, my spirituality is low. I think we want to move away from experience to truth as the basis for our spiritual experience, our spiritual growth and nurture, and our spiritual thermometer. It's not based on experience, it's based on the truth of what God is doing inside of our hearts.

Verse 49: *The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."*

I wonder how many parents have sat before the Lord saying, "God, would you please keep your hands on this child. Lord, would you please protect this child. He's going to kill himself, Lord. If

you don't do something here, the way he's living right now he's going to be dead soon. Lord, I just pray you protect him." As parents we can feel the pain of that.

He doesn't listen. This dad doesn't listen to the rebuke of the crowds. He just responds and he's just coming before Jesus with this pleading.

Jesus' response in verse 50 is, "*Go,*" *Jesus replied, "your son will live."* Wow. What a statement.

That dad finds something in that statement that he believes. It's okay. It's done. And he goes out and he's heading home. *The man took Jesus at his word and departed.* Didn't need any evidence, he just obeyed. Sometimes we obey and God does the miracle. We obey. That's our job is obey. Leave the miracles to God, we just obey.

Verse 51: *While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.*

This happened in the afternoon. We're going to see about one o'clock in the afternoon Jesus says, "*Go.*" He's got to go twenty miles back down to his home in Capernaum. He's not going to be able to make it all in the same night. He's going to get there partially and he's probably going to have to camp overnight somewhere, spend the night somewhere. But he gets up probably early in the morning and he makes it all the way.

On his way when he's almost home his servants meet him. *While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.*

Verse 52: *When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him."* "I just want to ask you. He says he's doing well. When did he start to get well? I've just got to ask you this." One o'clock yesterday.

Verse 53: *Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live."* So he and his whole household believed. Wow. Wow. "I've just got to ask you, He's doing well? I know he wasn't doing well when I was home. I know that he was dying. I sat next to him. I knew we were in pain. Now he's doing well. About what time? Just tell me. What time did he get well?" One o'clock yesterday. "That was exactly the time that I was with Jesus and Jesus said he was well. Man, it's amazing."

I wonder how that guy's life was different. Because when you become a Christian your life radically changes. I'm sure that when he looked at the flowers the next day and he saw the life in those flowers he thought about God in a different way. He thought about Jesus and what Jesus does to people. And every time he played with his son I'm sure he remembered Jesus and what God had done for him in answering his personal prayer.

One of the neat things about the gospel as we move through the gospel story is that we can put ourselves in the story and imagine the feelings of the people and just enjoy them and see what

God is doing and feel the helplessness and feel the rescuing and experience the grace. Because God wants to do that in our lives as well. That's what He wants to do.

Now Jesus is going to do a lot of work in Capernaum. He's going there. He's going to do ministry. And this whole family it says, this *whole household* (verse 53) *believed*. I'm sure they became His supporters, that they were the ones who helped Him. When He needed something they were there to help Him do what needed to be done.

Verse 54 says, *This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.*

If you look at the miracles, the first miracle obviously was the turning of water into wine. That's what He did when He was in Cana. This is the second one that he's referring to also down in Cana. But if you look at that story and the woman at the well and this story here, all of them together, we see that Jesus does things in different ways in different places. Sometimes He goes to a party and He does a great miracle there. Sometimes He is dealing with the death of a little boy. And Jesus is meaningful in the midst of that. Jesus works with a down-and-out person like the woman at the well, but He also works with a royal official, someone who's wealthy. Jesus is for everyone.

Let's go into chapter 5. *Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.*

Here we have a picture of the temple area. Maybe you can see this is the Sheep Gate here. But this is a northern gate here. This is the outside wall of the city and this is the pool. It's called the Pool of Israel here because this is really a map from Nehemiah's time. But it's still the Sheep Gate here. So there was this pool that existed.

Covered colonnades were porches that existed all around this particular pool. In these covered colonnades people would sit under the shade of the colonnade and not have to sit in the bright sun. That's the setting for the story that takes place here.

Verse 3: *Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.* So this apparently was a place where it was custom now for the people who were sick in one way or another, disabled, they would come and they would be under the porches and they would all hang out together.

The rest of verse 3 and verse 4 in some of your Bibles is either in parentheses or is in a footnote. The reason for that is because the Bible translators, godly men and women who translated the scriptures from Greek and Hebrew into English, came to this particular passage, looked at all the manuscripts that are available for us today and they noticed that these next few words in the end of verse 3 and verse 4 don't seem to be in the earliest manuscripts that we can tell. They don't seem to be there. It seems to be a statement, a descriptive statement that has come in afterwards and so they acknowledge that in our text for us so that we'll know that.

We'll also see that in John 8. The translators, these godly people that translated the Bible for us (the NIV for example), want to show us some integrity with the text as they work with it. So they come to this particular passage and they help us see that this may not have been originally there, but may have crept in by the scribes to explain why what's happening is happening. There's that kind of description here.

Let's look at the description that it says there in the end of verse 3. Here's why they were there. *And they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.*

So they had a belief that if the water was stirred up they could run down, get in the water, the first one in would be cured. That was their perception at the time and that's the description that is given there.

Let's go into verse 5. *One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Asthenia* – that's an invalid. He couldn't operate. He didn't have the strength to do what he would like to do. That's what *asthenia* means.

*One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"*

I want to point out several things. First of all, He only goes up to one man. There's a whole bunch of people who are sick. In this case He's only going to heal one of those people. Interesting what Jesus is doing here. Maybe because He knows that working in this one man is what this man needs at this particular time.

The second thing is He asks him a question. *"Do you want to get well?"* Seems to me like a silly question. Why wouldn't anyone want to get well? I think the reason he asks him this question is because I think some people don't want to get well. They like being sick. In fact, being sick gives them a certain sense of protection, that there's a certain predictability about being sick. I think a lot of people stay within their *asthenia*, their invalidness, their inability to do what they wish they could do because they're protected. And this protection that they built around themselves is very safe for them.

So Jesus is asking the man, "Are you willing to step out of your safety zone? Are you willing to get well? Do you want to get well? Because it's going to mean some change in your life."

When this guy gets well he's going to have to get a job no doubt. Here's the guy who's going to start walking around. People aren't going to care for him anymore. They're not going to be bringing him food. They're not going to be cooking his food. They're not going to be making his bed. He's going to be doing all those things himself now.

So the question is a very valid one, not only for him but for us. Do we want to get well? Because sometimes people have to get to a point in their life where they say, "Okay. I am sick of this. I'm



done with the pornography, I'm done with the indebtedness, I'm done with the foul mouth, I'm done with the habit I have, and I'm ready to make the change." This man is ready. And so Jesus says to him, "Do you want to get well?"

I think we can put ourselves into the story. When we look at that word *asthenia* in another passage in Romans 8:26 it says, *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our asthenia*. Each one of us God wants to do the work in the invalid part of our lives, but we have to be willing to give it up.

The man says in verse 7, "*Sir,*" *the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."* "I'm victim," he says.

This is how some people are today and it prevents them from getting healed. "I'm a victim." "My life is so bad nobody ever calls me." "Everybody else gets pregnant, but I can't get pregnant." "Everybody else has solutions." "People treat me unkindly. People are mean to me." "I never get an advantage. Everybody else gets the advantage of me." "I can't get a job." So some people are victims and that victim mentality keeps them in their *asthenia*. They can't get out of it.

Do you want to get healed? Jesus is saying, "Do you want to get healed?" The man's saying, "I got lots of excuses of why I'm here. I'm stuck here in the midst of all this." Then what Jesus says to him breaks through that. I really like the way Jesus is able to break through into people's lives. The Samaritan woman, the nobleman and his son, and now this particular person who's an invalid for thirty-eight years.

*Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

Jesus heals one man and He tells him to do something. "Get up and walk. You can't stay here by the pool. If you want to be different, if you want to change, you've got to get up and walk. I'm going to help you do it, I'm going to heal you, but you've got to do your part. You've got to get up and take that mat and get out of here and walk out of here."

It's such a valuable message for any of us. When we're stuck in that place we've got to get out of the boat and walk on the water. "I want to do miracles in your life," God says, "but you've got to do your part. You've got to get up and walk. You've got to do what I'm calling you." Some people like their bed. They like lying in it.

Jesus heals this guy. Amazing thing that happens in the midst of this. And the religious leaders don't like it. Look at the next verse. *The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."*

I can imagine the guy saying, "Look, I've been crippled for thirty-eight years and you're telling me today's not the right day for me to be healed? No way." This guy says, "Look. I'm healed."

*“It’s the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”* The thing that’s amazing to me is that these religious leaders were nitpicking about the burden he was carrying under his arm, but weren’t seeing the tremendous burden that was lifted from his heart. Now this man’s healed. God has done something tremendous in his life. They can’t see it. Spiritual blindness on the part of religious leaders who should know better. There are some people who hang around the church or they grow up in the church or wherever and they should know better, but they can’t see it because they put God in a box.

Verse 11: *So the man replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”*

*So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”* as if they didn’t know. There’s only one guy healing people around there in Jerusalem. It’s Jesus.

Verse 13: *The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.* This guy didn’t even know it was Jesus who healed him. “I’m sorry. I don’t know his name. I don’t know who it is.”

*Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”* You see, Jesus knew that this guy could, by having a pattern of self-gratification, end up in some similar place where he’s again crippled in his life.

Each one of us can find ourselves in a similar situation. If we don’t deal with the self-gratifying of the issues within our heart we can find ourselves in *asthenia* again. We can be trapped. We can be struggling. So Jesus is warning him.

But it’s interesting that Jesus finds the man in the temple. I find that very encouraging. Here’s a guy who gets healed, now he can walk, and where does he walk to? He walks to church. He walks to worship. He knows where to go. God has done something amazing to him and so he goes into the temple to worship the Lord. I just find that to be encouraging and a breath of fresh air. For here’s a guy who has been healed.

*“Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”* Verse 15: *The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.* Now he knows who it is and now he’s going to claim it is Jesus. “He’s the one who has healed me.”

Let’s just finish this story. Verse 16: *So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

Now the scene is being set for the eventual trial and execution of Jesus Christ. They’re going to try to trap Him. They’re going to spend time looking for ways to catch Him and to crucify Him. That’s their goal now and the scene is being set for that very part of the story.

The amazing thing to me now is you have a man walking. You have a boy who's now not dead and not dying; he's alive. You have a woman who's now living water inside of her. You have a town who's now been changed because of the testimony of that person.

God is in the business of changing people. That's what He loves to do. He wants to do that in your life and my life. And what does it take? It takes us to answer the question – Do you want to get well?

I find this to be a very important message for nonbelievers. If you're here today and you're not a Christian yet, I would encourage you to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He'll radically change your life.

But it's also a message for every one of us as Christians. Because sometimes as Christians we get stuck and we find ourselves in this *asthenia* of our lives. Whatever that looks like for you may be different from someone else. We get stuck. And when we're stuck in that place, God says, "Do you want to get well? You've got to take these steps." And when we do then God gives us what He calls grace. And that grace changes us and powers us so we can go forward and we can worship Him in the temple, we can worship Him and share Him with other people.

It's a beautiful thing, isn't it, what God does in our lives. Good for us to be pondering at this time of year. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, right now we thank you for what you've done in each one of our hearts already. We know you have more to do and we know that sometimes we get in the way of that process and so we ask you now to free us up on the inside to trust you more. Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters here that you'd give them peace, that you'd convict their hearts, that we'd all come to a place where we are serving you to our greatest potential. Lord, draw us close to you we ask. Break through in our hearts to the very places where we need that change to take place. In Jesus' name, amen.