

Reflections on the message by Jim Smith on Sunday 23rd May 2010
The Earnest Prayer of a Longing Soul (John 5: 1-10)

John 5: 1-10

¹After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. ⁴One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁵When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" ⁶The 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 going another steps down before me." ⁷Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." ⁸And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. ⁹So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

To have waited so long, thirty-eight years, waiting with a tormenting condition seeing others made well! The source of healing was almost within his grasp, but he spent every day in torment with healing at his fingertips.

The longing of his soul:

Lord let it be me.

Lord let it be here.

Let it be today, my time.

In Greek mythology, Tantalus was punished for stealing nectar for his son. Tantalus's punishment for his act was to go to the lowest reaches of hell and stand waist deep in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches. Whenever he reached for the fruit, the branches raised his intended meal from his grasp. Whenever he bent down to get a drink, the water receded before he could get any. Over his head towers a threatening stone. He was tantalised for eternity.

Jim grew up near the Liverpool docks where all types of goods arrived. Lorries lined up along the dock road from miles waiting to pick up produce giving the impression of warehouses full of produce, an abundance of provision. We have all received God's provision grace upon grace.

Jim's first job was working for a timber importer on the docks for several years, loading onto lorries. Part of the job was to go to visit the three Graces (the Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building) with paperwork. Bills of lading were needed to collect the full abundance from the docks. Jesus wants us to claim the fullness available. God says, "My grace is sufficient for you." God wants to touch your life, his Grace is sufficient for you.

Tantalus was in such great need with a vast supply.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Ethiopian asked what hindered him from being baptised. God's provision is available. God can meet my need here this morning.

The earnest prayer of a longing soul:

Lord let it be me.

Lord let it be here.

Let it be now.

In John 5, the word used for the many needy people is a plethora. A multitude was waiting with him, sitting, waiting, crying out not to be passed by every day. They were thinking, if those waters move don't pass me by. Other people may have greater faith. The man did not know who Jesus was but did accepted help. We are told he only found out later who Jesus was in the temple.

Have I got enough faith? Is mine insufficient to reach out and touch the Saviour?

No one was interested or came to help the man into the water. Perhaps the devil was saying, "You are a sinner you deserve this". But the Bible says illness is not always due to personal sin. In this case it

was. Jesus told him to sin no more in case something worse happened to him (John 5:14). Thirty-eight years of failure must have taken all hope. Perhaps some here are saying that, or that is not for me, or it is not my time.

In the passage: why did Jesus single out one man? Jesus went to the most hopeless and helpless man, who was in great need and crying out to God,

Lord let it be me.

Lord let it be here.

Let it be now.

Also the place and time Jesus chose to heal and empower was a feast of the Jews which is why Jesus went out to Jerusalem. It doesn't say which feast. It was not important. John wants to draw attention to the healing. The real reason Jesus went to Jerusalem was not for the feast but to heal this one man.

It is interesting to look at where and when Jesus healed people. Look at Jairus' daughter and the woman with the issue of blood. She had been suffering for 12 years. Jairus' daughter was 12 years old so the woman became infirm in the year the child was born, suffering, trying to find a remedy all that time. Jairus had 12 years of joy with his daughter. There is this contrast in the passage. One day their lives met together with Jesus. Jesus chose such a significant place for these people's lives to meet. Jesus, let it be me. Jesus brought fullness and wholeness at the same point on exactly the same day.

Here some have for years have seen others being filled, being touched by the spirit, while they have been sitting for years watching, bringing up a theological arguments.

One of Jim's friends is Bill who goes to Kingsway Christian Fellowship. He seemed to struggle and became involved with the Pentecostal church while Jim was at Bible College and against the Pentecostal Church. Bill moved by the Holy Spirit had his life transformed. Jim had head knowledge, but saw Bill's life changing as it was touched by the Holy Spirit. Jim had theological arguments that made him afraid to give control to God. David Elms and Bill prayed and asked Jim to speak in tongues (Jim had been taught at Bible College that tongues were finished). He experienced a transformation as he was touched by God. *Let it be me, here.* All the obstacles such as feelings of unworthiness, and of being too bad, were put to one side. *Let it be now.*

The time that God speaks is also interesting. For example, when Jesus met the woman at the well, the man at the tomb who needed to be set free, the blind beggar needing his sight, and Zaccheas, who climbed up a tree to see Jesus. There is a story that he returned daily to the tree with a jug of water to water the tree because that was a place where Jesus met his need.

A time came for John Wesley when he said, "My heart felt strangely warm. I felt my help come."

Jesus wants to touch us now, setting us free, healing hurts. *Lord let it be me, here, now.* Surrender to God and let him touch your heart.