

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

John is the fourth of the four gospels in the Second Testament. The gospels are the telling of the story of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his teachings. John is most likely the last of the four to be written down as it contains a more developed theological content, and heavy use of metaphor.

[V.4] Other ancient authorities add, wholly or in part, waiting for the stirring of the water, for an angel of the Lord went down from time to time 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.

festival of the Jews :: Biblical scholars believe this refers to either Tabernacles or to Passover.

disabled :: that is, with atrophied limbs. The fact that the people are lying outside in the porticoes indicates that this is not a winter scene.

thirty-eight years :: the text does not say that he was there for 38 years. Rather it's a way to underline the hopelessness of his case.

the water is stirred up :: Some thought this was the act of God or an angel. It could also be the flowing of an intermittent spring.

STAND UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND WALK. :: The command of Jesus is the same as that given to the paralytic let down through the roof in Mark 2:11.

it is not lawful for you to carry your mat :: Carrying things from one domain to another is the last of 39 works forbidden in the teaching list of Mishna Sabbath 7:2.

the Jews :: this doesn't mean the Jewish people, since the disabled man was also Jewish. Rather it's referring to the religious – political leadership.

DO NOT SIN ANY MORE :: Elsewhere Jesus does not accept the thesis that because a man was sick or suffering, it was a sign that he had committed sin (see John 9:3; Luke 8:1-15). Nevertheless, on a more general scale he does indicate a connection between sin and suffering. In the story of the paralytic lowered through the roof, which uses the same phrase as v. 8, the power to forgive sins in the major point of the narrative.

John 5:1-16

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¹ After this there was a *festival of the Jews*, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

² Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethesda, which has five porticoes. ³ In these lay many ill, blind, lame, and *disabled* people [waiting for the movement of the waters]. [⁴] ⁵ One man was there who had been ill for **thirty-eight years**. ⁶ 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?" ⁷ The ill 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." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "**STAND UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND WALK.**" ⁹ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a Sabbath. ¹⁰ 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.*" ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'" ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?"

¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. ¹⁴ 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." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the Sabbath.

Isaiah 61:1-7

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¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the *brokenhearted*, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners,

- ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
- ³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
- ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
- ⁵ Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks;
foreigners shall till your land and dress your
vines,
- ⁶ but you shall be called priests of the Lord;
you shall be named ministers of our God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.
- ⁷ Because their shame was double
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,
therefore in their land they shall possess a
double portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- When have you felt broken-hearted? Depression and mental-illness can lead to this shattering of the self. How might the man in the story of John 5 be broken-hearted?
- What do you notice about the conversation between Jesus and the disabled/paralyzed man? What's John trying to communicate through his retelling of this healing story?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

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Isaiah is the presumed author of this work of prophecy. Written in poetry (or verse) reflecting approximately the time of 739-711 BCE, it speaks to Israel's righteousness (*call to be the people of God*) and warns of the impending consequences of sin and injustice. Our selection paints a portrait of how God will deliver the people and invite them to righteous living and communal justice.

brokenhearted :: שָׁבַר pronounced [shabar] meaning “broken (in pieces), shattered, crushed” and לֵב pronounced [leb] Meanings “the inner man, mind, will, heart, conscience, moral character - the center of one's being.” It's thus someone who is completely shattered, unmade, destroyed. (the opposite of what God created)

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus reads this same text from Isaiah 61 when he reads scripture I the synagogue service in his hometown. He invokes it as his constitution or mission statement.

<< ¹⁴ [After his baptism and time of trial in the wilderness] Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,*
¹⁹ *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*”

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is this not Joseph's son?” ²³ He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’ ” ²⁴ And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. >>

Luke 4:14-24