

## **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: St John Chapter 5: Some Notes**

Try sharing this healing story with a worldly wise 14 year old. For maybe 36 years, this chap has been getting daily getting his friends to dump him just out of crawling distance from a pond that gets an unpredictable magic visitor every so often who makes people well (sorry about the pun) – or at any rate makes well the first person who gets there at the magic moment (and doesn't drown – this well/pond is deep). That first arrival is never going to be the man who can't walk, unless of course the helpful friends had put him right beside the pond so that he could fall in at the appropriate time. Jesus, presumably rather sarcastically, asks the man if he wants to be healed – maybe, after 38 years of being a pool spectator, he is quite content with his lot. At least he has company each day, from other disabled people. Then Jesus does his magic. No touching. Just a command to get up and walk. The man does what he has been told; but doesn't ask who is giving the orders. You might have expected all the witnesses to be rather impressed, or, at their most cynical, to enquire whether the disability had been real. Instead, some of them shout at the ex-disabled man because he is carrying his stretcher. The man might reasonably have argued that it would be pinched if he left it there (though what he is going to do with it, now he can walk, is unclear). Instead, he blames Jesus; and then, once he discovers who Jesus is, thanks him by reporting him to the authorities. Jesus, who we know doesn't automatically connect disability with sin, tells the man not to sin again in case he becomes disabled again. As a footnote, did nobody else present know who Jesus was; or did the critics just ask the man? If nobody knew Jesus was the healer, how could this selective healing have helped to persuade people that Jesus was who he said he was? Oh, and why this man, when the pool-side was presumably crowded with disabled people? Was Jesus being as random as the pool angel who just healed the first one to get to the water... and who didn't turn up at regular times?

There is, of course, a great deal else in this chapter that we can discuss. But it doesn't hurt, sometimes, to face up to the challenge from the notional 14 year old who isn't prepared to read the first part of this chapter, and just say Alleluia.