

That You May Believe & Have Compassion

John 5

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 8, 2018

Well, good morning everyone. It's glad to see you here today. Before we get started in our sermon for today, just want to mention a few things going on in the life of our church. One is if you're a visitor, I hope you got one of these visitor packets just to welcome you to our church. Also, to hear from you, there is a card inside of these packets that has information that has a space for your name, address and phone number, and asking if you'd like a visit. So, if you would like a visit from myself or someone here at the church, please let us know. There's also a space for a prayer request.

So, we know that some of you come with burdens and things that you would like to have prayer for. So, please take advantage of that. And you can give the card to myself or Jordan Henderson or maybe Richard if you don't mind; Richard Procee as well. You can give the cards to them, and we'll follow up with you on that.

Also, before we get started in our sermon today, I wanted to give you an update from our outreach event last weekend. As some of you know, we did an outreach last Sunday at Harrison Hot Springs. I had never been to a Canada Day celebration before, but it was great. They had Canadian flags, waving them around, and I actually looked for maple syrup ice cream. I couldn't find any. I was a little disappointed in that. But other than that, everything was great.

Just let you know kind of what we did while we were there, to let you know what some of the people in our church were doing at that outreach event, as I made my way down the sidewalk, I ran into some of our people who were passing out tracks and witnessing. And I just wanted to tell you about some of their conversations.

So, for instance, the first person I ran into was Dwayne Spies. And Dwayne had struck up a conversation with a couple who went to church in Abbotsford. He handed them a track and asked if they were believers. And they said, "Yes, we go to church." Do you remember this Dwayne? Do you remember this conversation? And he said, "Well, can I practice on you then? Can I tell you about Jesus?" And they said, "Sure, go ahead."

So, he took them through the Ten Commandments to show that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We've all lied, lusted, stolen and blasphemed, and God will hold us accountable for that. And then he asked them, "Do you know what God did to forgive you of that? Do you know what God did to pay the price for your sins if you will believe?" And they said, "Yeah." They said, "He sent Jesus." It's a great answer, right? "Jesus died on the cross for my sins." Which was wonderful to hear. That was such a blessing from that couple. And we encouraged them and talk with them a little further.

Then I went on down the sidewalk looking for my maple syrup ice cream. And I ran into Kevin Laser who was talking to a group of teenagers, and I mean he had a row of them. He had them lined up one by one by one. I was impressed. I was like, "How did you arrange that?" And he was just teaching them the Gospel, just walking them through the Good News. And he told me

before I got there, I walked in the middle of the conversation, but he said he asked if they believed in God. And two of them said “no,” and one of them said “yes.” And then the other two looked at this guy, and they said, “I didn't know you believed in God.”

So, Kevin went on to say, “Has anyone ever told you the Gospel?” And they said, “No, we've never heard of the Gospel. What is that?” And so just like Dwayne did, Kevin took them through the commandments to show that they have broken them and sinned against God. But then Jesus came to save them if they would repent and believe.

As a matter of fact, as I walked up, Kevin was explaining repentance to them this way. He said, “For part of my life, I was going this way. I was living for self, living for sin...” (he was just going down the sidewalk talking to them) “...living for pride, and then the Lord saved me and He turned me around and I've started going this way” (and he just starts walking this way). And he said, “The Lord gave me desires to live for Him, to live for His praise and for His glory. And to be saved, you have to do that. You have to turn around.” He said, “Will you do that today?” He said, “Will you consider what I've told you?” And they said they would, and we gave them some pamphlets and some tracks and had a great time.

I went a little further down and I ran into Rose Coward, who was talking with some people who I think might have been on something in middle of the day, and they seem kind of out of it. Rose was telling them about the love of God, about what Christ had done for them.

Jordan Henderson was doing that, Jamie Stuart as well. Shirley Lawrence and Pat Hildebrandt was there. Dave Porter was actually walking around with a big black box around his neck that said, “Are you a good person? Check ‘Yes’ or ‘No’”. And he had a magnetic stick that always pointed to the word “no”. You picked up the stick and you tried to push yes, and it takes you to no. And he would share the Gospel with them that way.

But I say all this to encourage you and to let you know this is what we love to do as a church, amen? We love to tell people about Jesus. Whether you do it at Canada Day, whether you do it at work, whether you do it at home, we love to tell people the good news.

Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” And I've told you before, you don't need to have a beautiful face to do this. You don't need to have a beautiful head, you just need beautiful feet. You just need to go and tell people what Christ has done, and God will use that for His glory. And our folks were doing that last weekend.

A young evangelist was once discouraged because he kept getting rejected. He kept trying and trying and trying to win people for the Lord, but he couldn't do it. So, he told an older evangelist, he said, “I guess you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.” To which the older man replied, “It's not your job to make him drink, it's your job to make him thirsty.” Friends, that's our job as a church. We want to make people thirsty. We want to give them a desire for the mercy and grace of God.

That leads to our chapter for this morning, because if you want to open your Bibles to John chapter 5, we're going to talk about being thirsty for God in this chapter; John chapter 5. And as you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're in a series on the Gospel of John called the “That You May Believe” series. Because John said that he wrote this book so that

you may believe. He says that at the end of the book in chapter 20:31.

I just want to read that to you, but at the very close he says, “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in His name.” John says, “There’s more I could have written, there’s more I could have said about Jesus Christ, but these things have been written so that you may believe. So that you may thirst after God and have a hunger for Him.”

As we've seen, as we've gone through the first part of the book, one of the ways John does this is by telling you about some conversations Jesus had with strangers. Most of the folks that we met on Canada Day were strangers, we'd never met them before. It's our first conversation with them. And John tells us about several conversations Jesus had with people like that. Jesus was a traveling evangelist, which means He went from place to place to place and told people the Gospel.

Back then, if you wanted to impact people in another town, you had to physically go to the other town. You couldn't put a podcast up, you couldn't put it on the radio. You had to physically go there and preach. And that's what the Lord Jesus did. And as He did, He ran into brand new people that He had never met before. People like Nicodemus, the Pharisee in John chapter 3. If you want to see how to witness to a self-righteous person, read John chapter 3. That was the kind of person Nicodemus was.

People like the woman at the well in John chapter 4. We talked about her last week. If you remember her, she was a person at the other end of the spectrum, a very colourful figure, right? She was an adulterous, lived a very, very rough life. And John 4 tells us how Jesus talked to her.

Then you come to the nobleman in John 4, at the very end of the chapter there. We didn't have time to look at him. But at the end of John 4, a rich man or a nobleman comes to Jesus and asked if his son could be healed. And Jesus says, “Yes,” and He heals him from a distance. He told him, “Go, your son lives,” even though He had never seen the boy. And the man believed and was saved. The end of the chapter says he and his entire family trusted in Jesus as a result of that.

That brings us to John chapter 5 because in John 5, we meet the last stranger in our list. There's four back to back at the first part of John's Gospel, and this is the last one that we're going to see. And he had a very different response to Jesus. Where everyone else believed in Jesus as a result of the conversation, or as a result of the miracles, this guy doesn't do that. He doesn't walk away with a thirst for God.

And just to introduce him to you, if you would read verses 1-5 with me. By the way, some people will say, “If I see a miracle, I will believe in Jesus.” I want you to read about this guy because he saw a miracle and he didn't. As a matter fact, if you look in Bible history, lots of people saw miracles and they didn't believe. The Israelites in the wilderness, remember all the miracles they saw? They went on with a hard heart. This guy is just like them. If you look in John chapter 5:1, it says,

1 After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda,

having five porticoes. 3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water. Whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. 5 Now a man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.”

John starts off in verse 1 by saying, “After these things there was the feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” This is the second of five visits that Jesus will make to Jerusalem in John's Gospel. The first is in chapter 2 when He cleans the temple. The last will be at the end of the book when He's crucified. But John says here that He made this trip for a feast of the Jews. We don't know what feast this is referring to because the text doesn't say. But the Jews had three pilgrim feasts each year, when the men of Israel were commanded to go to Jerusalem and celebrate.

There was the Feast of the Passover in the spring. There was the Feast of Pentecost in the fall...in the summer. And then there was the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall. And during each of those feasts, every resident in the City of Jerusalem was commanded to provide housing for the guests, making the city very crowded. There's some statistics that say the town would actually double or triple in size during these feast days.

When we were in Israel years ago, I think we were there on the Day of Pentecost, and the airport's just overrun today with people. It was like that back then. The ancient historian Josephus says, “An innumerable multitude came thither out of the country, and they from beyond to attend these feasts.” And the point is everything Jesus does is public here. Everything He does is in front of an audience.

Verse two says, “He came to Jerusalem and He arrived at a pool called Bethesda.” *Bethesda* is Aramaic for “house of mercy”. Because it was a pool where miracles allegedly occurred and mercy was given, as we'll see in just a moment. This was supposed to be a miraculous pool.

My wife and I have actually stood in the pool. Because as you're leaving Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem, you come right into this structure, this below ground pool. You go through the tunnel, or the cave, that Hezekiah built to bring water into the city, and you come right out of this pool which is just north of the temple. Half of it's been excavated, the other half belongs to the Greek Orthodox church who don't allow you to dig there. So, I guess we've stood in half of the pool. But it's a big structure, and verse 2 says, “It was surrounded by five porticoes or sets of columns.” Those columns aren't there today, they've fallen down.

But it says, “In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame and withered.” In other words, people who were hurting. And it says, “They were waiting for a moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons and stirred up the water, and whoever stepped in first was healed.”

Now, if you have an NIV Bible or an ESV Bible, you probably thought I was prophesying in the spirit, because you don't see that in your text, right? That was supposed to be a joke and nobody laughed. All right, well. But at the end of verse 3, all the way through verse 4, if you have those translations, they're footnotes in your Bibles.

And if you have an NASB Bible, the New American Standard Bible, it has brackets around those to show that there's some debate as to whether these verses should be in here or not, because they don't appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts that we have. And not only that, but this is the only time in the Scripture where miracles are said to occur in one place over and over and over again. It is the only place where an angel stays in one location and heals people. You don't see that anywhere else in the Bible. So, there's a little discrepancy about this. Most translations leave it out.

Just as a side note to encourage you, that's just a real quick comment on this text if you're wondering why it looks that way in your Bibles. But this is one of the few verses in the Bible where we have an issue like this, just to encourage you.

Someone asked me one time, they said, "How do you know that the Bible is true with all the years and years and years of copying it?" And the answer is pretty simple, there weren't years and years and years of copying. We have some manuscripts of the Bible that were written within a couple of centuries of the New Testament. As a matter of fact, we have a fragment that was probably written by John himself. If you go to the British Museum today, there is a fragment of John 18:38 that dates back to about AD 80. It could have been written by John himself. And it's the passage where Pilate asked Jesus, "What is the truth?" Do you remember that passage? There's a fragment of that on display in the British Museum.

I say that to say this is a rare thing in the Bible. In fact, more than 99.9% of the verses in the Bible are not debated at all, except by those who debate everything. And of those that are debated, none of them affect doctrine or theology. All this is to say you can have confidence in your Bibles. This is just a verse with some discrepancy in it.

Let me move on to verse 5. He goes on to say, "There was a man there who had been ill for 38 years." Now, just to put that in perspective, this is one of those things you read in the Bible and you kind of pass over. One commentator said, "This man was sick longer than most men in his day lived." In fact, Luke 3:23 says Jesus was about 30 years old when He began His ministry. Which means this guy was sick eight years longer than Jesus had been alive; six to eight years longer. And you can imagine that kind of a sickness would affect your attitude and outlook on life, right? It would affect your demeanor.

When we first got married, Katie was a spinal injury rehab nurse, and she worked with paralysis patients. And one of her patients was an Indian man who was paralyzed from the neck down in a traffic accident. A truck hit his car on the highway and left him unable to walk or move his arms and his legs. And I asked her, I said, "If you could describe this guy in one word, what would it be? What one word would you use?" And she said, "Angry." He's an angry man because he feels cheated out of life. And if that guy was angry after a few years like that, can you imagine what this guy was like? 38 years. Cheated out of life.

You can add to this, that sick people in the first century were in bad shape because they didn't have hospitals back then. And even if there were, there wasn't much medicine. A lot of it hadn't been invented yet. And even if you had access to the hospitals and medicine, you didn't have any money because most of the jobs were manual labor jobs, and this guy couldn't do any of those. So, he's helpless. He's a totally helpless person.

Let me ask you this because you might not have thought about this before, but why did Jesus help him? You ever thought about that? Why did Jesus heal this guy? Like I just said, the pool is full of sick people. They're everywhere. Verse 3 says, "There was a multitude of them." That word could translate "a plethora or a throng of them". With all the added crowds that come in for the feast, this pool was just overrun with people. Why did Jesus heal this guy?

Let me say it another way because I think this is important. If you were the Son of God, who would you heal? Who would you talk to? I mean this world is full of sick people. This world is full of the lame and the dying, it's full of sinners. Why did Jesus talk to this guy?

I don't know if you've thought about this, but if you were the Messiah, you would probably share the Gospel with politicians, wouldn't you? It's what I would do. You would go talk to the people in power, so they could influence the other people, right? They could pass laws and they could enact bills to make the country better. Or maybe you would reach out to the rich people, so they could throw a fundraiser and buy a hospital. Maybe you would go to the people like Nicodemus and the people in high circles.

I'll tell you what I would do; I would go to the people who would be grateful for it. If I was the Messiah, I would go to the people that would say, "Thank you," right? Jesus doesn't do that here. He goes to a guy that was none of those things.

As one author said, "This man was not the stuff of which heroes are made." He didn't even say, "Thank you" at the end of this. And why did Jesus heal him? I think the answer to that question is this, why did Jesus heal anybody? Why did He give the Gospel to anybody? And the answer is, because He was compassionate. That's why He healed people like He did. That's why He gave them the Gospel, because He was the merciful Saviour. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. We could learn a lot from His example.

You know, Charles Peace was a notorious criminal from England who was executed on February 25th, 1879. And right before he died, an Anglican minister read to him, "That those who die without Christ, experience hell which is the pain of dying forever." At which point Peace stopped him and he said, "Sir, if I believed half of what you said, I would walk across the whole of England even if it were covered in glass just to save one person from that place."

My friends, if we believed half the Gospel, if we believed half of what it said, we would be way more compassionate. And that's what Jesus shows us this morning. And if you're taking notes, let me just walk you through this. Give you an outline for this. In John 5, we're going to see three ways Jesus was compassionate with this man. As I was reading this story, I thought there's just no other way to explain why He did this than just the simple fact that Jesus was compassionate.

This guy didn't have anything going for him. I mean at least the woman at the well at the end of it goes back to Samaria and tells her friends about Jesus. Do you remember that story? I mean at least she did that. At least Nicodemus was respectful and called Jesus Rabbi, right? The nobleman, he was very appreciative. This guy's nothing, he's none of those things. And the only reason Jesus does this is His compassion. And He shows His compassion three ways.

The first one is this: He takes the initiative with this man. Jesus takes the initiative with this man. Jesus approaches him, not the other way around. Most of the time when Jesus healed someone,

they came to him. As a matter of fact, I think this might be the only time when Jesus actually approached someone to heal them. If you remember, there were times in Jesus' ministry when people were even grabbing at His robes just to touch Him, so they could be healed.

If you read in verse 6, this is a very different encounter. It says, "When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?'"

Now, you read that and you may not think too much about it. But if you think about the one who was saying this, it changes things because Jesus had just healed a man, right? I mean this is not small talk here. I mean Jesus could actually heal someone. He could really do a miracle.

But if you look in verse 7, this guy doesn't know that. And it says, "The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.'" As we just read above this, this guy was at the pool because he believed an angel the Lord came to stir the waters, and the first person in was healed. And in response to Jesus' question, he says, "I have no one to do that for me. I have no one to put me in the water first."

Which I want to point out to you was not true. because if you lived for 38 years in this condition, you had somebody helping you. I mean somebody had to be bringing you food, someone had to be giving you clothes, someone had to be picking you up and taking you to the pool. I mean sick people and paralyzed people back then lived entirely off the charity of others. So, to live this long, he had somebody helping him. So, this is not exactly true. As a matter of fact, this is an exaggeration. Maybe it's a lie or, at best, it's just a complaint.

D. A. Carson says, "Verse 7 reads less like a response to Jesus' question, and more like the grumblings of a crotchety old man." Jesus asked him, "Do you want to get well?" The man says, "What do you think? Why else would I be here? What a stupid question. It's just nobody's helping me." Which is not a good way to start a conversation with Jesus.

Now, if you look at verse 8, look what Jesus does. It says, "Jesus said to him, 'Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.'" In response to his complaining, Jesus gives the man three commands; each one more difficult than the next. Let me just quickly show them to you. He tells him, "To get up," which in Greek is *egeiró* – "stand up, arise". Second, "Pick up your pallet." The word for a "pallet" refers to a thin bed or a pallet of straw that was used when you're traveling. You could roll it up on your shoulder and carry it around and then lay it down and sleep on it. And third, "Walk." Or in the Greek it actually says, "Go on walking."

Three commands, "Get up, pick up your pallet, and start walking." Remember, this guy's been sick for 38 years. He hasn't done any of those things for four decades. And if you look at what happens now in verse 9, it says, "Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk." Our English translations, at least the NASB, starts off with the word "immediately" to show you something here. It means, "straight away," "at once". The Lord told him to be healed and he was healed. The Lord told him to get up and he got up. No waiting around, no hesitation.

And I think it goes without saying, this is very different from a lot of the miracles that we see

claimed today. Most of the miracles today are accompanied with the idea that if you just believe, God will heal you. If you have enough faith in yourself, or faith in the Lord, God will make you better. And if He doesn't make you better, it's because you don't have enough faith. In theological terms, that's called the Word of Faith movement. It means you can access the power of faith through words, through speech.

Now, I want you to look back at this passage and tell me where this man's faith is. It's not in here. Now, in all fairness, most of the time when the Lord healed people, they did have faith. This is a very unusual passage. But he didn't believe anything, and Jesus healed him anyway. Because a miracle is not God plus man, a miracle is just God. It's not God plus your works or your faith, it's the Lord doing it alone. God chooses to bless our faith, He chooses to use our faith, but He doesn't need it.

Let me also add as we've already said, this was an act of compassion from Jesus. Jesus didn't have to do this miracle, He didn't have to heal this guy. Like I just said, there were sick people everywhere. He could have chosen someone else, but He healed this guy out of compassion. And I think it would be good to remember this, we don't evangelize people because they deserve it or because they're grateful or they respond like we want them to, we do it out of compassion. We do it because we love people.

I've told you the name Robert Chapman before. But Robert Chapman was a pastor from England, who in the 1800s was witnessing to a grocery store owner who spat on him. He was sharing the Gospel with this man, he was telling him that he was a sinner and he had broken God's commandments, like our people did on Canada Day. And the man didn't like it, so he spat on him right on his face. And a few weeks later, a relative came to Robert Chapman and asked if he could buy some groceries for his church. He asked if he could donate some food items for his ministry. And Robert Chapman said, "You can do that, but you have to buy them from this guy, this grocery store owner who spat on me."

It was a small town that he ministered in, there weren't a lot of grocery stores. So, the relative went and did that. And when the grocery store owner found out about it, he came to Robert Chapman and he said, "Why did you do that? Why were you so kind to me?" And Chapman said, "Because Jesus was kind to me. Because Jesus forgave me and now I can forgive you."

Friends, that's what we do with people. We take the initiative, we take the lead in telling them about Jesus because Jesus was that way with us. Someone told you the Gospel, so you need to tell it to someone else. Someone told you about Jesus, and so you go and tell others.

That leads us to the next way Jesus was compassionate with this man. He was compassionate by taking the initiative. Second, He was compassionate by being persistent. Not only did Jesus take the initiative with this man, but He was persistent with him. He talks to him and then He goes back and talks to him again. He shares, and then he goes back, and he shares again. If you read on in verse 9, it says, "Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

Let me just make a quick comment on that because it's important. The word for Sabbath in Hebrew is *Shabbat* which means a "cessation". The Sabbath was a day when Israel was supposed to cease from their work. Deuteronomy 5 says, "Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six

days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath; and in it you shall do no work.” So, Israel was to work for six days and rest on the sabbath, rest on Saturday. Which sounded simple but the Jews took it to extremes and they added extra laws to it.

I actually looked it up, and in the Mishnah (or the rabbi's commentary on the law) the Jews came up with a list of 39 laws, or categories of laws for the Sabbath. And each one of those had subcategories. And one of them said, one of these laws said (or I think one of the subcategories implied that) you can't do miracles on the Sabbath. So, you can't perform great acts of God because that would be work on the Sabbath. It also said you can't carry something on the Sabbath. Which is what this man did.

If you look in verse 10, it says, “So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.’” The Jews here refers to the leaders in Jerusalem. John uses that title several times in his Gospel not to refer to all the Jews but to those in charge; chief priests, the rabbis, Pharisees, people like that. In verse 10, the leaders say to this man, “It's the Sabbath and it's not permissible for you to carry your pallet.” In other words, “You're not keeping our laws. You're not following our rules, and so you'd better cut it out.”

If you look at verse 11, here's what the man says, “But he answered them, ‘He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘pick up your pallet, and walk’” In other words, “It's not my fault someone else made me do it. It's not my fault, but the guy who healed me told me to do this.” If you notice, earlier he says it's not his fault that he's not healed. Now he gets healed and he says, “It's not my fault I'm carrying my pallet,” as if someone else was carrying it for him, right? This guy was something else. And Jesus has just given him his life back, He's just restored his health after 38 years of disease, and you would think he would be a little bit grateful. And instead, he sells Jesus out.

Verses 12-15 says,

12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk?’ 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. 14 Afterwards Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do you not sin anymore, 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.

I looked back over some notes, I'd actually preached on John chapter 5 about eight years ago. And I had preached ten sermons on it. So, you guys are fortunate this is not the first of ten today. But when I was preaching through this section, I called the sermon “Amazing Gracelessness,” because this is so graceless. I mean if you noticed, nobody has any grace in the story. The man doesn't have any grace because he's not grateful for what Jesus had done.

And then he goes and tells the leaders. And if you notice, the leaders don't even ask one question about this miracle. They don't show any surprise. They don't say, “What do you mean He healed you?” The guy had been sick 38 years, you can imagine a lot of people knew his situation, right? They just want to know who's responsible for breaking their laws. That's all they want to know.

They just want to know who told him to carry his pallet. There is no grace in anything in here but Jesus. The man doesn't know who it was. He told them that, and the moment he finds out, he sells Jesus out, right?

Judging by his actions and what the Lord says in verse 14, what Jesus says there, Jesus says, "Behold you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." That sounds like his disease might have been a result of his sin. His paralysis or weakness, or whatever it was that was going on with him, might have been a result of this kind of behaviour; this self-pity and blame shifting stuff. And Jesus tells him to repent or it'll get worse.

At this point, I want you to notice the guy disappears from the story. I'll say more about that in a minute. But you would expect maybe in verse 15 to read that the man dropped down on his knees and he called out, "God, be merciful to me as a sinner," right? He doesn't do that. He just goes away.

But I want you to notice also, going back to this idea of compassion that Jesus was persistent with this guy. He didn't give up on him. He talked to him, didn't get a very good response really. And then He goes back and He talks to him again. He shared with him, or He healed him, and He followed up. That's how you help people. That's how you show compassion by being persistent with them.

It's been said nothing great is ever done without persistence. Nothing great ever happens without endurance. You have to keep on keeping on. You have to get going when the going gets tough. And that especially applies to things like evangelism and counselling and spiritual ministry. You have to endure with people. You can't be what we call a "one and done" evangelist. "I give you the Gospel one time and that's it, I'm done." Or we also call it the "hit and run" approach. You know, you hit them with the truth and then you go on your way. Hit them with the Bible and say, "Truth hurts," you know. Alright. I mean Jesus does that. This guy's betrayed Him twice. And he shows no sign of gratitude and He comes back, because He was persistent.

Norman Geisler was a professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary for several years, and he wrote many books. Some of you might have actually read a book written by Norman Geisler. But he says he didn't grow up in a Christian home or in a church. He never even went to a church until some neighbourhood kids invited him and an elderly man drove him there. And Norman Geisler said, "I counted it up, and that elderly man drove me to church on a bus for 400 straight Sundays, 400 Sundays. For seven and a half years, this guy never missed a single week getting me to church." And he said, "That's important because..." he said, "...it wasn't until the 400th time that I came to know the Lord. It wasn't until the seventh year of driving me there that I was saved." He says, "If he would have given up on me in year six, I might have been lost. If he would have given up after the 300th time, I might have never come to faith in Christ."

Friends, let me just ask you as you read this story, are you giving up on people today? Are you quitting on them after the 200th or 300th or 400th time? Are you quitting after a few short years? Are you a "one and done" evangelist? You give them one chance, one opportunity and that's it? If you are, can I remind you that if you're in Christ this morning, I guarantee it's because somebody was persistent with you. If you're a believer this morning, you are saved because someone hung in there with you, and you need to hang in there was someone else.

I grew up in church and I had probably heard several hundred sermons before I got saved. I mean I was hearing sermons in the womb. I mean some of you know what that's like. My mom brought me to church before I was even born. I was saved at 16 which means I heard 16 years of that stuff. Some of you heard more. You heard 17 years of sermons, 18 years of sermons, 30 years of church life before the Lord saved you. And you need to remember that and be patient with others.

The Puritan preacher William Taylor has a good thought on this. He said when you preach the Gospel, you do it with a swivel cannon, not a mounted one. You do it with a moving weapon. Which means, you don't say the same thing every time. You don't mount up on a hill and repeat the same words and the same phrases, and you just do it once. He said you do it multiple times, as many times as necessary. You put it on a swivel, and you turn it this way and that, and if they don't get it this time, then you come back over here at this time. And if they don't get it that time, then you come back again as many times as you have to. That's what Jesus did.

If you read the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, it's just one evangelistic encounter from Jesus after another. And if you remember, the disciples heard all of it. It's just one discipleship opportunity after another for them. We need to be that way with others.

That leads to one more way Jesus demonstrated compassion for this man. He takes the initiative, He starts the conversation. He singles this man out and says, "Do you want to be healed?" He also persists with this man. He comes back and talks to him again and then talks to him again, He takes the swivel approach.

That leads to a third way which is our final way that Jesus demonstrates compassion here, and that's with courage. Jesus shows courage with this man, particularly with the Jews who come after Him. The man disappears from the story, but the Jewish leaders stay behind to talk to Jesus and He shows tremendous courage. I'm sure you know this but you can't evangelize or minister to anybody without courage, without putting your neck out there. If you look in verse 15, it goes on to say this, it says,

The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well. 16 For this reason, the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But He answered them and said, "My Father is working until now, and I myself am working."

So, we just mentioned the man goes away and he tells the leaders, "I found Him. I found the guy who told me to break your law." And verse 16 says they begin to persecute Jesus. And the way that's worded, it makes it sound like they kept doing it. "For these reasons, the Jews were persecuting Jesus." It was an ongoing thing, over and over and over again.

And the word for persecute here is *diókó*, which means "to put something to flight" or "to harass someone". Now, it doesn't say what they did here, but they harassed Him. They drove Him crazy. We don't really know what that could have been, but it could have been something as simple as interrupting Him every time He talked. It actually got worse than that if you look in verse 18. It says, "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own father, making

Himself equal with God.”

You know, if you've read through John's Gospel or if you've been with us through this series, you'll notice so far it's been a pretty peaceful Gospel. I mean so far, Jesus has gotten along well with the Jews. There's been no problems. He cleans out the temple in chapter 2, no problems; no ongoing ones. He has a long conversation with Nicodemus in chapter 3, no problems. But now, that begins to change. And verse 18 says, it's over the issue of Jesus' relationship to the Father, because He calls God His own father, making Himself equal with God.” That's why they persecuted Him. That's why they came after Him.

In response to that, this is where I want you to see Jesus' courage. He goes on to give us the longest speech so far in the Gospel of John. It starts in verse 19 and it goes all the way through to verse 47; 26 verses. These guys are trying to kill Him and Jesus makes a speech.

I don't know about you guys, I haven't had anybody try to kill me lately, but if they were going to do that, I wouldn't make a speech. He talks for 26 verses. And what He says essentially is, “I'm equal with God and let me prove it to you.” Let me just walk you through this, we'll go through these verses pretty quickly.

For one thing He says, “I do what the Father does. That's how you know I'm equal to God.” Verse 19, it says, “For whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” In other words, “The Father works on the Sabbath, so I work on the Sabbath. I do miracles like He does.” “The Father judges and receives honour,” in verses 20-24, “So I judge and I receive honour,” Jesus says.

Next, if you notice, it says Jesus does raise the dead. That's another reason He's equal to the Father. In verses 25-33, He raises the dead and brings them back to life. These men were judging Jesus here, they were calling Him to account, and Jesus says, “One day I will call you to account. One day you guys are going to answer to Me.”

Next, He says John the Baptist testified to this, verses 33-35. In verse 26, He says, “My miracles testify to this. My miracles show that I'm the Son of God. Verse 37, “The Father testifies to this.” That was probably a reference to Jesus' baptism where the Spirit came down like a dove, and the Father says, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” Some of these Jews might have heard that. They might have been present for that event.

Finally, one more thing He says here is that, “You can look to the Scriptures and see this.” The whole section ends in verse 47 when the Lord says at the very end, “But if you do not believe his writings [Moses' writings] how will you believe My words?” But the point is Jesus showed great courage in all of this. He showed incredible bravery.

By the way, He said this as far as we know in the temple. The temple was a very volatile place in Israel. I mean it's volatile today. If you go in the Temple Mount today, they don't let you hold a Bible study up there, because it might end up in a fight. And they don't even let you pray up there, because that might end up in a fight. And you see soldiers out there today carrying semi automatic weapons to keep the peace. It was like that back in the first century. The Romans had a garrison of troops stationed on the Temple Mount called the Fortress Antonia, named after Mark Anthony. It was thought that when Jesus was crucified, they held Him overnight in the fortress.

But that fortress was there because conversations like this ended in violence in the temple.

That doesn't stop the Lord, because He has compassion on these men. He has mercy on them. He wants them to know the truth. And the truth is, "You're not going to be saved by keeping the Sabbath, you're not going to be saved by works, you're going to be saved by trusting in Me, and I am the Son of God." You have to believe that in order to be saved. In order to go to heaven.

I want you to see how this ends. It's a pretty strange scene you have here. These people are trying to kill Jesus, they want to put Him to death, and He talks for quite a while. But if you notice in verse 47, how does it end? It just stops, right? We don't know what happens. They could have disbanded peacefully. They could have broken out in some sort of a riot where Jesus escaped through the crowd. But we don't know, it just stops.

I think it's done that way to remind us that most of our evangelistic conversations go this way. We tell people the truth, we tell them the Gospel, and then it just stops, right? We don't know what happens. Most of our conversations on Canada Day were like that. We shared Christ with people, we walked them through the law, showed them His grace and mercy, and then it was just left open-ended. But we know this, we know God won't do anything if we don't have the courage to speak up and say something, amen? God is not going to save anybody if we don't tell them about Jesus. So, will you do that today? Will you tell them?

I just mentioned, we just celebrated Canada Day here in British, Columbia, but in the US, we just celebrated the Fourth of July to remember the signing of the Declaration of Independence. And I have to be honest, I totally forgot it was the Fourth of July. I called a friend of mine on Wednesday and I said, "Hey, aren't you working today?" And he said, "Jeremy, it's the Fourth of July." I'm forgetting American holidays now. I'm remembering the Canadian ones now and ... it's a mess.

But I say that because one of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence was named John Hancock. He was a very brave fellow. He was the first to sign the declaration, and his signature was so big that it was twice the size of everyone else's. If you've ever seen that actual document, the Declaration of Independence, you'll know what I'm talking about. His signature was ginormous. There actually became a phrase that's used now that says, "Can I have your John Hancock?" It means "can I have your signature?" But it was said that he did that, he signed it so big so the King of England knew where he stood. The King at the time wore glasses and John Hancock wanted him to read his name without putting on his glasses.

I can't help but think that if someone like that could do that for their country, surely, we could do this for the Lord. I mean if someone could do that for America, surely, we could stand up for Christ and say something, and let people know where we stand. We can be bold and courageous for the Lord and we can do it out of compassion and out of mercy. Let's have a word of prayer.

Father, we covered a large text this morning, but we pray that it was done out of compassion as we've talked about. We thank You Lord for what Your Son has done on our behalf. We thank You for what He did for the most helpless of people like this man. And I do pray, I don't know maybe we'll see him in glory; this man who didn't believe here, maybe he believed later. Maybe, he didn't, Father. But we pray that we would take these lessons and draw them to heart.

May we be a compassionate church Lord, that reaches out to the lost. May we be bold and courageous like Jesus was here. Not out of hate, not out of meanness, but out of love for people. And when we see them going the wrong way, may we step in and tell them about Christ.

Father, I do pray if there's any of you here who are lost that they would be reminded or their eyes would be open to the greatness of this Saviour. That if Jesus is all these things, then they can be saved if they just believe in Him this morning. They don't have to keep the Sabbath, they don't have to do all these works, they can just trust in Your Son. And we thank You for Him.

I know there's many brothers and sisters here who are saved this morning. I pray this passage would encourage them to be evangelists, to be compassionate, and to tell people about their great Saviour. This Saviour who saved all sorts of people. He saved people at the heights of society and He saved people at the bottom, and He saved people all in between. Father, may we go out and do the same in His name, we pray, amen.