

Introduction

His Hands...Our Hands, His Feet...Our Feet

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 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 a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 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?” “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.” Then 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. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” But he 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?” The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

John 5:1-13

Sometimes I think I'm weird. There are things I wonder about that other people don't seem to give a lot of thought. Like, what about all the other sick people who were there? Why didn't Jesus heal them? I mean, the Bible describes a pool—the pool of Bethesda—surrounded by five covered porches. Under each of those porches, there were disabled people, a great number of them it says. How many is that? We don't know, but there were a lot of them, however many that was.

But I wonder, “Why did Jesus only heal the one guy?”

All of those people would go there and wait under those porches all day long. They were waiting for the water to move, because tradition said that whenever the water moved, it was because an angel had come and dipped its wing into the water, and the very next person who got in would be healed.

This is not the place to discuss whether that was actually what was happening or not, with an angel’s wing and healings, etc. Maybe something was happening, or there would not have been a great number of people sitting under those porches all day waiting for the water to move.

Anyway, Jesus arrived in town for the feast and ended up at the Pool of Bethesda. He saw this guy who could never get into the water in time. He was an invalid, paralyzed in some way, and somebody else always beat him into the water. And of all the people there in need of healing, Jesus only healed this guy.

Now Jesus obviously saw all the other disabled people who were there, too, but he singled this guy out. Why? I have asked that question of hundreds of people, and the answers are pretty much always the same—usually something like, “Maybe he had been sick longer than the rest” or “He was the only one who had enough faith.” Faith nothing, this guy didn’t even know who Jesus was. The text says that when Jesus told him to pick up his mat and walk, he was immediately healed. There is no indication that his faith had anything to do with it. And then Jesus just slipped away into the crowd. Was it that this guy just somehow wanted healing more than the rest? That’s silly. They all wanted it desperately. So I ask again, why just him?

Allow me to speculate for a moment. Not to be blasphemous, sacrilegious or anything like that, but what would you have done if you were Jesus? Really, just think about it. What would you have done if you had walked up to that pool, looked at all the human misery wrapped in anticipation and patient hope, and seen all the need, knowing you could instantly do something about it? Remember, you are Jesus, God in the flesh, supernaturally both God and man, complete with the power to heal.

I know what I would have done. I would have healed them all. I would have lined them all up, looked each one in the eye and healed every last one of them. What about you?

Why didn't Jesus do that?

Now, the Jewish leaders were upset at him because he healed this guy on the Sabbath. That, in and of itself, is amazing to me, but they were, and so he offered an explanation. His response was specifically about why he healed on the Sabbath, but woven into his response in John 5 was an understanding of the very issue that I've laid out here:

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." . . . Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does . . . By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."

For whatever reason, the work of God the Father that day only involved this one guy—the invalid of thirty-eight years. We don't know why; we are not told. It is another one of those times in Scripture where we are simply left to trust in his sovereignty. We only know that Jesus did not just do whatever he wanted. He did not just go around meeting all the needs that were around him. He did not use his supernatural ability to heal anyone and everyone he saw who needed it. He was only about his Father's work. He never did anything by himself. He could only do what it was that he saw his Father doing. He lived, worked and ministered, not to please himself, but to please his Father who had sent him. And on that day, it meant healing only this one guy.

Jesus was God in the flesh. He was Immanuel, meaning "God with us." God the Father sent his son Jesus into the world so that he, God, would be with us. When Jesus came to our world, he was God in the flesh. As he walked among us, the feet of God were doing the walking. As he reached out to the people around him, the hands of God were doing the touching. He carried the very presence of God into whatever situation he entered. He was

an extension of the very hands and feet of God.

In John 14:20 Jesus also said, *“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

If Jesus was in the Father and we are in him and he is in us, then wouldn't that mean that we carry the very presence of God into whatever situation we enter as well? We are the Body of Christ, after all, and therefore an extension of the very hands and feet of Jesus. Should not we, his Body, have ministries that are modeled after the ministry of Jesus? Everywhere we go and everyone we touch, we should see as opportunities for God to go there and touch through us.

Jesus himself said in John 20:21, *“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

I suggest to you that as we are sent to walk among the people of this world, the feet of Jesus are doing the walking. As we are sent to reach out to the people around us, the hands of Jesus do the touching. We carry the presence of Christ into whatever situation we encounter. We are an extension of the very hands and feet of Jesus. Whatever the Lord is interested in doing, whoever he is interested in touching, wherever he is interested in going, as his hands and feet, that is what we ought to be doing—nothing more, nothing less.

By the pool that day, God the Father was interested in healing one guy. It might not seem fair to us, but as his hands and feet, that is what Jesus did—nothing more, nothing less. This book is the story of people who have answered the call to be the hands and feet of Jesus, just as he was the hands and feet of God the Father, doing whatever that means—nothing more, nothing less.

As our mission statement says, House of Faith has always been about “Taking Jesus to neighborhood children, youth and families”—even before we were actually doing all of that. At the Lord's leading, we began by first reaching out to neighborhood children through our Backyard Bible Clubs. We did this faithfully for a few years until the Lord moved us toward also reaching out to youth through the Exodus and Refuge programs. Again, we

did this faithfully for a few more years until it was time to start targeting the families of those kids in whom we invest so much.

We are learning that being the hands and feet of Jesus isn't something we do, but something we are. He has led us to flesh out this calling through the process narrated in the pages of this book. As we continue to experience what it means to be his hands and feet, our prayer is that others may read this story and consider letting him use them more and more as his hands and feet too.

The story is told in three parts, each with a scriptural base.

I. PRESENCE

A chronological overview of the hows and whys of the ministry.

II. FACES

Short snapshots of four of our very own kids who have grown up through our ministry.

III. FIELDS

Insight about the ministry's spread beyond our community and a challenge for you to prayerfully consider how to better reach yours.