

Who Wants to be Well?

John 5:1-18

May 17, 2025

Peter Hiett

Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/who-wants-to-be-well/>

Transcript document prepared by: Heather Eades.

This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please email us at transcripts@thesanctuarydowntown.org. Thank you!

Message

Video clip: *Monty Python's Life of Brian*
HandMade Films (1979)

Beggars line a street in Ancient Rome, calling out to passers-by as they hold up cups. A man healed of leprosy (Michael Palin) is begging too and he chases down Brian Cohen (Graham Chapman) to get him to donate.

Leper	Alms for a leper?
Leper	Alms for a leper?
Ex-Leper	Alms for an ex-leper? All right, final offer, half a shekel for an ex-leper?
Brian	Did you say ex-leper?
Ex-Leper	That's right, sir. Sixteen years behind a bell and proud of it, sir.
Brian	Well, what happened?
Ex-Leper	I was cured sir.
Brian	Cured?
Ex-Leper	Yes, a bloody miracle, sir! God bless you.
Brian	Who cured you?
Ex-Leper	Jesus did, sir. I was hopping along, minding my own business, all of a sudden, up he comes, cures me. One minute I'm a leper with a trade, next minute my livelihood's gone. Not so much as a buy your leave. 'You're cured mate.' Bloody do-gooder.
Brian	Well, why don't you go and tell him you want to be a leper again?
Ex-Leper	I could do that, sir. Yeah, yeah, I could do that I suppose. What I was thinking was, I was going to ask him if he could make me a bit lame in one leg during the middle of the week. You know, something beggable, but not leprosy, which is a pain in the ass, to be blunt. Excuse my French, sir, but uh...
<i>Brian's mother Mandy (Terry Jones) yells down to him from their front door.</i>	
Mandy	Brian! Come and clean your room out.
Brian	There you are (drops coin in cup)
Ex-Leper	Thank you. Thank...half a dinare for half me bloody life story?
Brian	There's no pleasing some people.
Ex-Leper	That's just what Jesus said, sir.

Jesus didn't actually say that, but we do say that. That fellow is a bit perturbed with Jesus, for He healed him of Leprosy and wrecked his livelihood, and so he's going to ask Jesus to make him

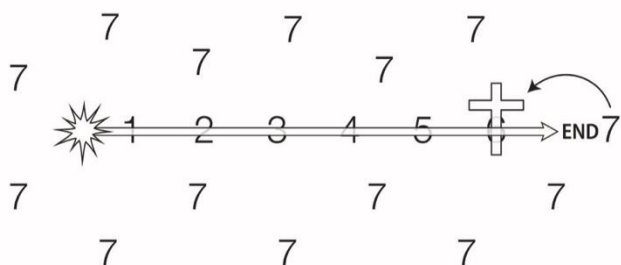
“just a bit lame in one leg.” He doesn’t want to be well. Who would ever ask to be lame? ‘Cause, that’s just lame. And even more lame would be to blame the lame, as if they all just wanted to be lame. That would be super lame.

- Who would ever want to be lame?
- Who would ever desire their own destruction?
- Who would choose a self-imposed prison of disease?

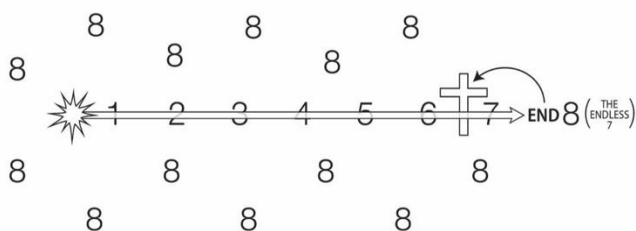
[Peter lights a cigarette] Excuse me. Preaching really stresses me out, and this helps calm me down. This...and a doughnut, and some scotch. Relaxation, nourishment, and joy.

John 5:1:

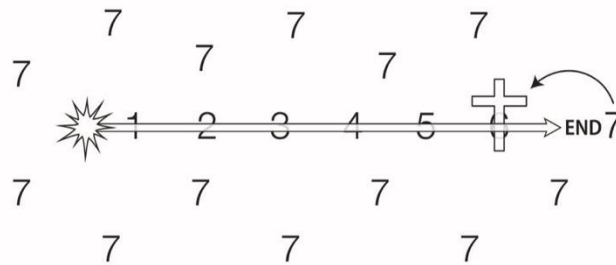
After this [the 2nd sign] there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.



According to Leviticus 23, every Sabbath, every 7th day, was a feast. But the Jews were to also hold three great pilgrim feasts, when pilgrims would journey from all over Israel to Jerusalem.



Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles which ended with an 8th day Sabbath that pictured an endless Sabbath, an endless 7th day, and the ingathering of all things, the Harvest of the earth.



John 5:1-5:

After this 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, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. ³ In these lay a multitude of invalids [*astheneia*: “the weak”]—blind, lame, and paralyzed, [(invalids waiting for the moving of the water)] ⁴for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: Whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. ⁵ One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

Verse 4 isn’t included in most ancient manuscripts, and so it appears as a footnote in the ESV. It seems to clearly explain what we’re about to read, and so, it was most likely added to the original Gospel by someone trying to explain what we’re about to read to people unfamiliar with the Pool of Bethesda. Actually, you can still visit the Pool of Bethesda.



I took these pictures about 18 years ago when we visited Jerusalem. It’s hard to visualize because of 2,000 years of rubble.



This image comes from a great little video on YouTube which I'll include in the notes to this transcript.¹

Bethesda was actually two giant pools (all together about the size of a football field), and as you can see, it was surrounded by these five-roofed porches and situated just to the north of the temple. Pilgrims would bathe in this pool before worshipping in the Temple, but not just pilgrims...



There was a legend—one that I doubt that Jesus or John ascribed to—a legend that at times an angel would touch the water, and the first invalid into the pool after the water was troubled would be healed. That would be a blessing for obvious reasons, but also because that invalid could then enter the temple through the sheep gate and make offerings in the inner courts of the Sanctuary—no longer a lost sheep, but . . . found. “Bethesda” means something like “House of Mercy.” “Beth” is Hebrew for “House” and most think that the “esda”- part comes from the word “Hesed,” which is translated as Mercy, Kindness, Steadfast Love—that is Unconditional Love.

There were five roofed porches around the pool of Mercy, just as there are five books in the Law of Moses. And this man had been lying there for 38 years, which is exactly how long the Israelites wandered in the wilderness because they lacked faith in the Word of God, who is described in the Law but was actually with them on the entire journey—before them, behind them, and in them in the inner Sanctuary. John doesn’t casually record these details; he wants us to understand the nature of this absolutely tragic scene on more than just one level. It’s the third sign in the Gospel of John.

So, get the picture: There are hundreds of the last and the least of these, having limped to this pool, or perhaps having been placed there by family members—hundreds languishing there, just waiting to compete for mercy whenever an angel troubled the water. It had become an institution. It was their health care system—Can you imagine that? It meant that the first were first, and the last were last. So, those most needing help didn’t get help, and those least in need of help helped themselves... which is actually not being helped at all, not being saved. The first were first, and the last were last at getting to the pool of Mercy. But Mercy is the First, freely choosing to be the last, that another might be first.

So, just imagine life as an invalid at that pool under the five-roofed colonnade: Even if you did get into the pool of Mercy first, it just demonstrated that you were last at being merciful; even if you won, you would have just lost at Love, which is everything that the law requires. And so, even if your body were healed, your heart would sink even deeper into a prison of self, and you would not be well. You might even tell yourself that you had “earned the Mercy,” which would only reveal that you had no idea what Mercy is, for you had just crucified Love, and life—life would be death, just outside the temple.

And yet, if you were first and chose to be last, in order that another would be first... if you were a winner and chose to be a loser, that another would win...if you had been exalted but chose to be humbled, to exalt another...that would mean that mercy had bubbled up miraculously from inside of you, as if your soul were no longer a pit but a fountain of Mercy in a living temple. And yet, I doubt that much of that sort of thing had been happening at the Pool of Bethesda under the five roofed colonnades.

Instead...

- It was the survival of the fittest; “That’s just the way people are,” we like to say.
- It was the survival of the fittest, and just by striving to be fit, one would only demonstrate that they were least fit for the kingdom of God.
- It must’ve been hell... 38 years, and who would want that?

John 5:5-7:

One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When 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 [hugies: whole, complete, well]?” Do you want to be well? ⁷ The sick [aestheneo] 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.”

And Jesus said unto him, “My bad. I’m sorry for the insensitive question. The problem is obviously somewhere else and has nothing to do with you” And so, he left him alone there under the five roofed colonnades. —He didn’t actually say that or do that, but what a question: “Do you want to be well?” That’s the kind of thing that people ask when they don’t want to help a person and only want to blame a person. So, was Jesus blaming this guy? “Do you want to be well?” The man really didn’t answer the question. But who would want to be sick?

In second grade, I wanted to be sick, for if I was sick, mom would write me a note—an excuse. And then I wouldn’t have to ride the bus and face my fears. And I could tell myself “I want to, but I can’t; it isn’t my fault that I have to stay home and watch *Gilligan’s Island*.” Sometimes on Sunday mornings, I want to be sick, and Susan won’t write me a note: “Dear God, Peter’s been hurt before, and he doesn’t want to be hurt again; he’s a victim; he’s got an excuse.” Instead, she says, “You’re OK: Get up, pick up your bed, and start walking.” But I still make plenty of excuses—excuses as to why it is that I shouldn’t have to risk the pain of love; why I shouldn’t have to live in freedom.

We don’t know what this guy’s sickness was, but he evades the question and starts making excuses. Maybe he wanted to be a victim. If you’re a victim, it means that you’ve done nothing wrong, but someone else is wrong; you avoid blame, but you also avoid mercy. If you’re a victim, then nothing’s your fault, and so there’s nothing for which you can be forgiven. The excusable are the unforgiveable by definition, for if you can be excused, there’s nothing to forgive. And if you’re a victim, you can’t be fixed, for there’s nothing that’s wrong with you. But if by chance there is, you’d never know it, for you’re a victim of thinking you’re a victim...until someone tells you the truth.

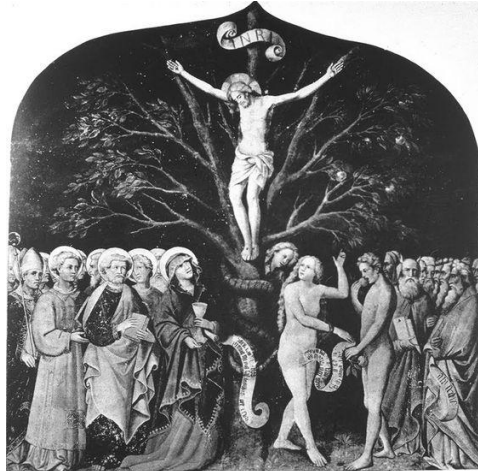
So, is Jesus blaming this guy? You know, it's hard to imagine anything more callous or ugly than someone who blames an afflicted person for his afflictions, like the friends of Job. And yet, that's exactly what we do when we say things like, "If you only think positive thoughts, Job, only positive things will happen to you." Or, "If you only had faith, you'd never get sick; you'd always be first in the pool, and you'd never get crucified." In John 9, Jesus will tell us that it's those who think they see that are most blind; it's those who think they're well that are most sick; it's those who think they're strong that are most *astheneo*—most weak. In John 9, the disciples see a man born blind, and they ask Jesus, "Who sinned— this man or his parents?" Jesus answers, "It was neither, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." It sounds like Jesus blamed God. So...

It's hard to imagine that Jesus blamed this guy, as if he could've done something different, and yet Jesus certainly didn't tell him that he hadn't done anything wrong. As you know, Jesus heals him, but when He finds him later in the temple, He says, "See you're well.. Sin no more that nothing worse may befall you." That sounds so harsh, and upon reflection, so bizarre: "Sin no longer"— the Greek means "Stop sinning," which would mean that this guy had been sinning all along and was still sinning. Which is weird on so many levels.

1. He's been an invalid lying on a mat for 38 years— what kind of sin could he have been committing? (All we know about this guy is that he has spent 38 years competing for Mercy and trying to capture the Love of God).
2. To say, "stop sinning," implies that he's still sinning even as he is— quote— "worshipping" in the temple.

So maybe his sickness was an excuse for his sin or a manifestation of the sin, which is the real sickness. According to Scripture, all suffering is the result of sin, but suffering doesn't pay for sin, suffering reveals sin and points us toward our Helper.

- In the garden, which Jews believed to be the temple mount...
- In the garden, Adam—which means Man, who is all of us and each of us...
- In the garden, Adam couldn't find his Helper who was with Him—Scripture is very clear: our Helper is God.
- In the garden, Adam couldn't find his Helper, so God planted a tree in the middle of the garden... look at it.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

That's Adam, humanity at the base of the tree looking at the fruit on the tree. On the tree is The Good in Flesh, The Life in a Body. On the tree is Our Helper made fit for us—his people, bride, temple, and body. The snake whispers, help yourself, save yourself, justify yourself, make yourself in the image of God—take the fruit. As you know, we all take the fruit, not knowing that the fruit is the Good and the Life... and we begin to know that we're not good and so hide. God finds us, questions us, and we make excuses—it was the woman—the woman that you gave me; it was you—we blame God, and God blames us but not as if we could have done any differently; we didn't yet have the knowledge of Good and evil, "God consigned us to disobedience (in the words of Paul)."

God blames us, but not as if we could have chosen the good. And yet He doesn't excuse us, as if we didn't actually choose to do evil. He consigned us to disobedience (that's choosing the evil), that he may have mercy on us all (that's what it is to be chosen by the Good). Mercy is the Good. And Mercy is the Life. Jesus is the fountain of Mercy. Jesus is the Grace of God. Jesus is Love in Flesh and made fit for us his Bride. Jesus is our Helper. The invalid had said "I have no one to help me into the pool."

I'm just saying that we all sin and we're all sick, but we all make excuses and so we're all blind to the constant forgiveness that is our God. Sin is a lack of faith in Grace who is our God. Sin in us, which is a lack of faith in us, caused each of us to take the knowledge of Good and evil in an attempt to save ourselves. And the Law came in "to increase the trespass," in the words of Paul, The Law of God is knowledge of Good, and evil written in stone...And the Law is also every law which we make trying to clarify the law of God... and so save ourselves from God who is our Helper.

I'm saying that maybe this guy is 38 years old, or better, 40 years old. So, this guy was born without knowledge of the Good. Then, along about the age of 2, he started taking knowledge of the Good, attempting to make himself Good, which made him rather bad. And along about the age of 5 he left home and went to school where they all assume the first are first and the last are last and so teach: "Always strive to be first by making others last, you'll know you've won when you see that another has lost."

- Have you ever noticed that winning a spelling bee or winning the 100-yard dash...
- Have you ever noticed that what we call “winning” in school, or business, or war is what we call “cancer” in a body?

I mean maybe this guy has no conception of what “healthy” is, what “love” is, & what “Life” actually is: not survival of the fittest but sacrifice of the fittest. I mean Maybe he was born without the knowledge of Good and evil, chose the evil, and was then institutionalized by an entire world of evil.

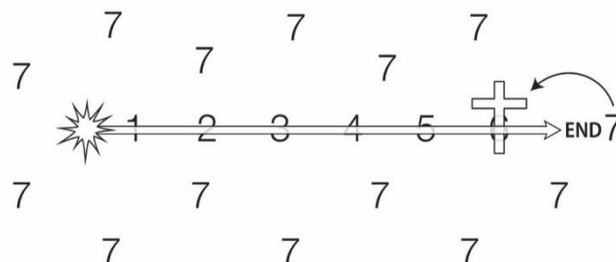
In the movie Shawshank Redemption about prisoners in Shawshank prison in the 1940’s, there’s an old man named Brooks who threatens to kill another man, just so he can avoid the freedom of parole and stay in prison. Younger prisoners, like Andy Dufresne and Heywood, just don’t understand, and “a lifer” named Red, played by Morgan Freeman, explains:

Video clip: *The Shawshank Redemption*
Columbia Pictures (1994)

Prisoners are talking in a prison courtyard. Ellis Boyd “Red” Redding (Morgan Freeman) is addressing a group of guys.

Red	The man’s been in here fifty years, Heywood, fifty years. This is all he knows. In here, he’s an important man, he’s an educated man. Outside he’s nothing, just a used-up con with arthritis in both hands. He probably couldn’t get a library card if he tried. You know what I’m trying to say?
Floyd (Brian Libby)	Red, I do believe you’re talking out of your ass.
Red	You believe whatever you want, Floyd. But I’m telling you these walls are funny. First you hate them, then you get used to them. Enough time passes, you get so you depend on them. That’s “institutionalized.”

Maybe that invalid under the five roofed colonnades was institutionalized. Maybe we’re all institutionalized by “The Principalities and Powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.” Maybe we’re born into bondage like the Israelites and so, of course we want to go back to Egypt for it’s all that we know.



According to Scripture, this world of space and time, is like a prison, and myself—the self I think I have created—is the deepest prison. My world and myself are like a bubble of darkness, for I have willed what God does not will and so willed myself into nowhere and nothingness. My

world and myself are like a dark bubble of death floating in a sea of life called the Kingdom of Heaven. Heaven is Faith, Hope and Love. Heaven is the Song of Grace that never ends. Sin is refusing to listen to the harmony of infinite and unceasing mercy.

The Old Man Brooks was released, and in a few weeks, he had hung himself alone in his room—trapped in a prison far worse than stone. He didn't want to be well and that's the worst possible sickness, it's sin. But in Shawshank prison, there was actually one prisoner that was innocent. So, he truly was a victim, and yet he chose to be that victim on behalf of the other prisoners... His name was Andy, and he was already free. One day, having heard about Brooks, Andy breaks into the warden's office, and plays music over the prison loudspeakers for all the prisoners to hear.

Video clip: *The Shawshank Redemption*
Columbia Pictures (1994)

The scene opens in a prison office, in which a record player is playing opera music over the loudspeaker to the entire prison. Red (Morgan Freeman) is narrating as the camera pans around to see Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) reclining with his hands on his head, enjoying the music. He has locked himself in the office to play it over the loudspeaker, without permission. The scene switches to show prisoners throughout the prison stopping to listen.

Red I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words and makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you, those voices soared higher and farther than anybody in a gray place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments, every last man in Shawshank felt free.

The scene cuts to guards visible through the window in the door, trying to break into the office and the warden looking through angrily.

Red It pissed the warden off something awful.

The scene cuts to the men eating lunch in the mess hall later.

Prisoner 1 Was it worth it, two weeks in the hole?

Andy Easiest time I ever did.

Prisoner 2 Bullshit, there's no such thing as easy time in the hole.

Prisoner 1 That's right, a week in the hole is like a year.

Prisoner 3 Damn straight.

Andy I had Mr. Mozart to keep me company.

Prisoner 4 So they let you tote that record player down there, huh?

Andy It was in here (taps his head). In here (taps his heart). That's the beauty of music; they can't get that from you. Haven't you ever felt that way about music?

Red Well, I played a mean harmonica as a younger man. Lost interest in it though. Don't make much sense in here.

Andy In here's where it makes the most sense. You need it so you don't forget.

Red Forget?

Andy Forget that there are places in the world that aren't made out of stone. There's something inside that they can't get to, that they can't touch, that's yours.

Red What are you talking about?

Andy Hope.

Red	Hope? Let me tell you something my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane. It's got no use on the inside. You'd better get used to that idea.
Andy	Like Brooks did?
<i>Red drops his silverware on his tray, picks it up and walks off, visibly upset.</i>	

John 5:6-7:

Jesus said, “Do you want to be well?”⁷ The 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.”ⁱⁱ

He thought that making himself first was his only choice and maybe it was—he couldn't choose the Good—that is, the Good who freely chooses to be last that others would be first.

- He couldn't choose the Good and so the Good chose him.
- He couldn't choose the Life and so the Life chose him . . . and that's the Good.
- He couldn't get to Mercy . . . and so Mercy got to him. . . and that's the Gospel.
- He couldn't Love, until he knew that Love had always loved him.

John 5:8-10:

Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath [that's the 7th Day].¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful [*exesti*: literally, it's not “of what is,” it's not what's done] for you to take up your bed.”

It seems that they didn't want him to be well, which is profoundly sick. It's like wanting folks to lose, so you would feel like you've won. It's like wishing folks to hell, in order to go to heaven. What's wrong with them? They say, “It's the Sabbath and it's not lawful for you to take up your bed”. You see, carrying your bed on the Sabbath was against the law—not God's law, but Jewish law. In Scripture, God commanded the Jews to do no work on the Sabbath. So, the Jews set out to define “work.” And thereby judge their deeds. They came up with 39 different classifications for “work,” one of which consisted of “carrying a burden.” But then they had to define a “burden,” and so they produced reams of laws defining “burdens.” That law became the Mishnah, and it's quite a burden of work. Some think that my job is to turn the Gospel into practical application points and teach Mishnah.ⁱⁱⁱ But my calling, and your calling, is to play the music and sing the song in the hope that some will start dancing. So, if you say: “Preacher, tell us exactly what we have to do, and be practical!” you are saying, “Be a Pharisee, and give us some Mishnah.” Mishnah, like: Memorize 5 verses a day, pray for 20 minutes each morning, give 10%, don't say ‘shit’, and never smoke. But Jesus, goes out of his way to break Mishnah and he even commands invalids to do just the same: “Pick up your bed and walk!”

And now, I ought to tell you: This is the second cigarette that I have ever smoked. The first was fifteen years ago preaching on these verses. But I should also tell you that sometimes I smoke my pipe probably too much. Sometimes I have some whiskey and sometimes too much, and sometimes I eat doughnuts which can kill you faster than whiskey and tobacco combined. But all

of this—pro and con—is just Mishnah. I thought I ought to break some Mishnah, but don't miss my point: I'm not saying that it's good to smoke, drink, and eat doughnuts—cause that stuff can turn you into an invalid. I'm saying that there's something far more dangerous than cigarettes, whiskey and doughnuts. And that is making laws about cigarettes, whiskey, and doughnuts and then judging yourself and your neighbors with those laws, for that will trap you in a prison of self-righteousness and then utterly debilitating shame.

Constantly trying to justify yourself and blind to the fact that you've already been justified. Constantly trying to love your neighbor while competing with your neighbor and so rejoicing in his loss which you think is your gain. Constantly trying to love a God whom you are convinced does not love you, for you just can't seem to love your neighbor, let alone God, who is Love.

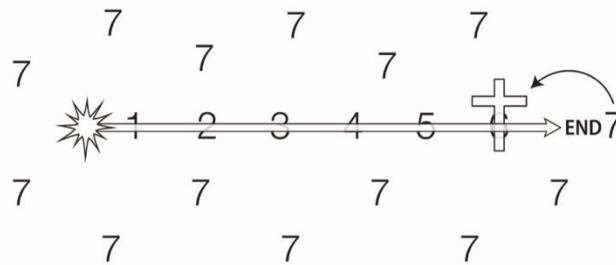
The entire law is fulfilled in one word: Love.^{iv} So, whenever we seek law (even God's law, which is perfect) in order to justify ourselves, we admit that we don't know Love and don't want to love. We admit that we need the constraint of law because we are not constrained by Love... while it's "Love that bears all things," including the mat that Love commands us to pick up and carry.

You see, an addiction to law is utter ignorance of Love, or even hatred of Love, unconditional Love: Bethesda, the house of hesed, mercy, grace, and love. When people don't want to love, they lust after law, call a lawyer, and begin to make excuses. And let me just say, law does have its place in a society short on Love, just like prisons have their place when hearts are hard and unredeemed. But the Sabbath is not a prison, and no one worries about laws in The Kingdom of Heaven for no one there ever wants to break one.

John 5:10-17:

So 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." ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.' " ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. ¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See [*oida*: see, know, behold], you are [*ginomai*: "have become"] well [*hugies*: whole, healthy, well]! Sin [present tense] no more [*meketi*: no longer], that nothing worse may happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."^v

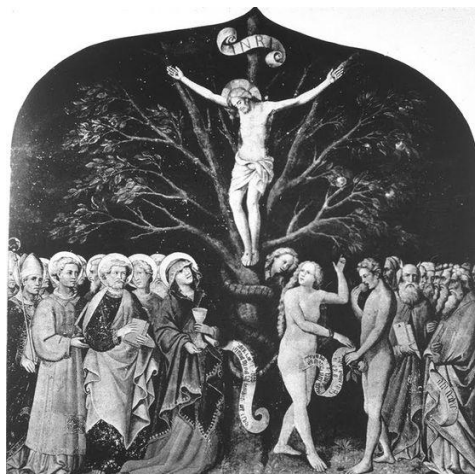
Maybe they didn't know, and we don't know, what "well" is, just like they didn't know and we don't know what "the Sabbath" is.



That's why I keep showing you this picture. He said, "My father is working until now and I am working." Genesis 2:3 "So God blessed the 7th day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." Well, if God was still working, perhaps he was still creating, and perhaps none of them and none of us are fully created—that is *hugies*, "complete." And so, none of us are entirely "well", and many of us have no idea what "well" is, for none of us are finished in the image of God. You can't choose the Good if you don't know what it is.

Jesus said, "My Father" is working, and yet work for God must be very different than work for us, for God never tries to be, for he always is I am, he is always now. "My Father is working until NOW, and I am working," said Jesus. Exodus 20:10, commandment #4 says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your *malakah*, (ordinary work) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you will not do any *malakah* (ordinary work), for God rested on the seventh day." So did Jesus, (who did not come to break the law but fulfill the law), break the sabbath law? ...or is work for Jesus actually resting?

Scripture does call him "the Lord of the Sabbath." And, he did just tell us in John 4, that his food was doing the will and accomplishing the work of the father; it didn't drain him it energized him. So maybe, work for Jesus is more like recreation or play; maybe it wasn't toil and labor but something more like a dance. He wasn't trying to dance; he was losing himself and finding himself dancing to the music of another world. He is the Logos in *carnos*, the logic of God manifests in meat, God's dancing body of flesh.



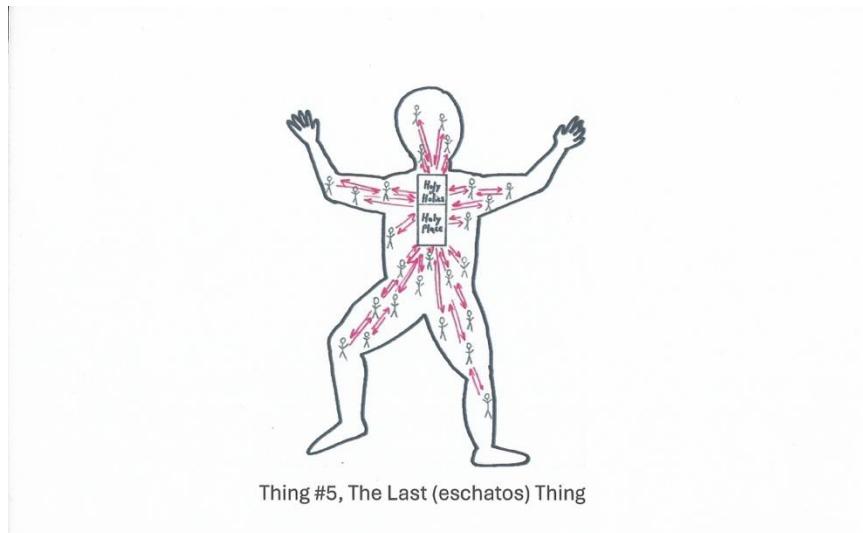
"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

Maybe for Jesus work was always rest, until that sixth day, the Friday when he bore our ignorance, our sin, and our shame, crying out father forgive them they know not what they do, and then, it is finished, as he delivered up his Spirit—his Spirit that descends upon his people... and fills his people



Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). *The Passion of the Christ* [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.

So that we would begin to love like him—the ONE who freely chooses to be last that all might be first, for when all lose, all begin to win. For in the Holy Place which is the presence of the Holy Day, the first are last and the last are first, the humble are constantly exalted and the exalted constantly delight in humility, everybody loses even as everybody wins. For eternal life is one great Dance of Love called “the Body of Christ” and “the Kingdom of God” in which everyone forgives and is constantly forgiven.



This is the Sabbath: The seventh Sign that is the Substance. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days. And he was speaking of the temple of his body,” the House of Infinite Mercy. Not only does most of the Institutional Church not know what the Sabbath is, they will kick you out for confessing that it exists.



This place where “everything is good, and it is finished.” Now, I know you may be thinking “Neet-o, but what does it mean to me.” It literally means everything to you; it’s the difference between languishing in hell for 38 more years and walking into Heaven, even here and even now. Did you catch what Jesus said when he found the man in the temple, that old stone temple, after he had picked up his mat and began to walk? He says, “Ide, Look, know, behold, SEE you have become well. Sin no longer that nothing worse may befall you.”



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

What was his sin? Wasn't it trying to make himself well, which revealed that he just didn't know what well is, and so couldn't even want to be well?

Wasn't it trying to be Good by taking the Good... so, he could no longer receive the Good or know the Good or want the Good—who is Mercy?

Rev. 21, on the throne of Mercy Jesus says “Behold I make all things new”

And now, to this man in the Temple he says, “Behold, you have become new, you have become well, stop sinning, shabbat, that nothing worse befall you.”^{vi}

I think he's saying:

- “You are well, right now—where eternity touches time.
- “You are well, stop trying to make yourself well.”
- “You are saved, stop trying to save yourself.”
- “You are right, stop trying to make yourself righteous.”
- “You are just,^{vii} for you have been justified. Stop trying to justify yourself.”
- “You are good, stop trying to make yourself good, and be the Good that I have made you.”
- “You are well, stop trying to make yourself well, lest you make yourself unwell and something worse befall you.”

Do you understand? You can only hear this voice now, and in the inner sanctuary of the temple that is your soul. And so, you can't live the Christian Life by trying harder to do so. You can only live your eternal life from your inner sanctuary, as you listen to the music; the voice of the one who speaks all things into existence.^{viii}

In Revelation 22, The angel says “His servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads...” His name is I Am. That means that when I look at “I Am,” I will reflect “I Am” and be just who it is that “I Am”—the image and likeness of God. No longer striving to be “me,” I can just be who it is that I truly am, in freedom.

Communion

So, on the night that he was betrayed, the beginning of the 6th day, he took bread and broke it saying, this is my body given to you. And he took the cup saying, this is the covenant in my blood, drink of it all you and do it in remembrance of me.

“In this is Love” writes John, So, do you want to be well? He knows that part of you doesn't want to be well, (confess it) And He is the part that does want to be well (thank him for it; it's mercy)

- When one person loves in a world that doesn't love it looks like a man nailed to a tree.
- When two people love in a world that doesn't love it looks like a good marriage and maybe even feels like a honeymoon.
- When all people love you have entered the gates of the New Jerusalem coming down, the House of Infinite and perpetual Mercy.

This is Bethesda, and it's not a pool, it's a river that flows from the throne and back to the throne as worship. Take the bread, dip it in the cup, and ingest the Seed. Then listen to His Word: “See? You have become well, stop trying to make yourself good, and be the good that I have made you, in freedom.”

Benediction



At the end of the movie Shawshank Redemption Andy escapes, but leaves a letter for Red. When Red is released on parole, he gets a job where Brooks had gotten a job and thinks only about violating his parole and returning to prison. “Terrible thing to live in fear.” Says Red, but then he finds the letter from Andy. He had written, “Remember Red, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.” The letter contains directions to a little paradise in Mexico. And Red gets up, picks up his mat, and starts walking; he meets Andy there by the sea and an ocean of Mercy.

You have a letter, and the music is playing all around you, so

- Every morning, take time to listen...
- Every morning, God is saying to you “Get up, pick up your bed, and walk.”
- And a morning is coming when God will say something like, “Get up, and leave that old bag of dust behind, today we’re going to fly.”

Believe the Gospel, and no prison will be able to keep you down.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlnVY5Ty3TQ>

ⁱⁱ Knowledge of Good and evil can't make you right, but it will reveal that you are wrong... and cause you to hide in a prison of shame.
And the Law can't make you right, but trying to justify yourself according to the law will increase the trespass and reveal that not only are you wrong, but your already dead... you are alone.
And Dead things can't choose to be well, for they have forgotten, or perhaps they never even knew what "Well" is...

ⁱⁱⁱ And when I don't, they get confused and say, *"I didn't understand the sermon; what's the point? And could you turn down the music, I don't understand the words."*

^{iv} Galatians 5:14

^v Literally "My Father works until now and I work."

^{vi} On the Mercy Seat, the throne of Mercy in the House of Mercy, The Temple of the New Jerusalem coming down, Jesus says: "Behold, I make all things new. And now to this man in the stone temple he says, "Behold. You have become well."

^{vii} "Right" and "Just" are one word in Greek for they mean the same thing throughout the Bible.

^{viii} Left to yourself, you don't want to be well, you want to be excused rather than forgiven and so can't even know what "well" means. But Jesus is "well," and he will turn into a fountain in you. And wherever you go and whatever you do, you can drink from this fountain. And whenever you realize that you're unwell, you can return and confess, "I didn't want to be well, but now I am well" and you will be well.