

## Week 4: Carry on

“Compassion will cure more sins than condemnation.” Henry Ward Beecher,  
A 19<sup>th</sup> century American Congregationalist  
clergyman and social reformer



We are with Jesus in dangerous territory for the third sign. Once again the sign is not the miracle itself, but the events afterwards. The Bethesda Pool is a site, you can still see today, where, in Jesus day the sick were taken to experience a healing miracle from an angel. The Temple precinct was an area where you had to comply with the Law of Moses, it still is today. Both beliefs were and are flawed.

### Read John 5:1-21

1. Why do you think Jesus and his disciples went to the Bethesda Pool?
2. Why do you think Jesus asked the man, “Do you want to get well?”
  - Why might he not have wanted to get well?
  - Why could he not find healing?
  - Why didn't Jesus put him in the water?
3. Reading 9-12, what is the problem here?
4. What are “the Jews” most concerned about?

It was neither Folk Religion nor Organised Religion that brought healing for the man. Then, when he caught up with him again, Jesus said, “hence forth do not stray” (v.14)

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said this?
- How can we make sure that we don't stray?

### Deeper In

Surprisingly, the law that forbids the carrying of mats does not appear in the Torah. It is a strict application of Nehemiah 13:13-15, so not a Law but an interpretation of the Law. An interpretation that itself was an interpretation of the Law with the aim of achieving personal purity.

The religious people Jesus faced were seeking personal purity and that can still be a problem today. The people trusting in folk religion were seeking their own goals too.

- Can you think of situations where people might seek God for their own benefit?
- Can you think of occasions when past versions of Christianity have got in the way of fulfilling Jesus' command to love?
- Does your current version getting in the way?
- When Jesus taught his followers to “Love as I have loved you” (John 13:34), what made that so revolutionary?
- Does that change in any way your outlook on the world around you?

*When your version of religion gets in the way of love, you have the wrong version. The person beside you must take priority over the potentially flawed religious view you have.*

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Next Week: John 6:1-15 Working lunch.