

## **John 4:46-54; 5:1-18**

Some of the hardest moments in life are the waiting moments.

Waiting for rain when the ground is dry.

Waiting for test results.

Waiting for a phone call that might change everything.

Waiting and wondering if God is already too late.

Our two gospel stories today are full of waiting—and full of people who are tired.

In John 4, we meet a royal official whose son is sick. Not just under the weather sick—deathly ill. This man travels a long distance from Capernaum to Cana. That's not a casual afternoon stroll. This is desperation. This is a parent who will do anything.

He begs Jesus, "Come down before my child dies."

But Jesus doesn't go.

He doesn't pack a bag.

He doesn't even move.

Instead, Jesus says something that sounds almost too small for such a big problem:

"Go; your son will live."

And here's the miracle before the miracle:

The man believes Jesus and goes on his way.

He has to walk home not knowing.

He has to spend the night with nothing but a promise.

He has to trust that the healing has already begun, even though he can't see it yet.

That kind of faith is not flashy.

It's quiet.

It's shaky.

It's the kind of faith that keeps putting one foot in front of the other.

Many of us know that faith well.

Then in John 5, we meet another man who has been waiting—this time for thirty-eight years. Nearly four decades lying by the pool of Bethesda, hoping to be healed. He believes that when the waters stir, healing is possible. But every time the water moves, someone else gets there first.

Jesus asks him a strange question:

“Do you want to be made well?”

At first, that sounds obvious. Of course he does. But listen to his answer. He doesn't say yes. He says, “I have no one to help me.”

That's the voice of exhaustion.

That's the voice of someone who has waited so long that hope has worn thin.

And Jesus heals him. Instantly. Completely.

But then comes the trouble.

Because it's the Sabbath.

The man picks up his mat—because Jesus told him to—and suddenly healing becomes a problem. Rules are more important than restoration. Law is more important than life.

And when the religious leaders confront Jesus, he says something that shakes everything:

“My Father is still working, and I also am working.”

In other words: God does not take days off from mercy.

These two stories sit together for a reason.

One healing happens from far away.

The other happens face to face.

One person believes before seeing.

The other is healed before believing.

One story is about trusting God's word.

The other is about God breaking through tired resignation.

And both remind us of something deeply Lutheran and deeply comforting:

God's grace is not limited by distance, time, or our understanding.

God works when we are strong—and when we are worn down.

God works when our faith is confident—and when it's barely hanging on.

God works when we follow the rules—and when the rules get in the way.

For a small rural congregation, that matters.

Because sometimes church feels like the official's long walk home—faithful, steady, quiet, unsure what tomorrow will bring.

And sometimes church feels like the pool at Bethesda—waiting, wondering if renewal will ever come, asking if anyone sees us anymore.

But Jesus shows up in both places.

He shows up on the road between Cana and Capernaum.

He shows up by the pool where hope has grown tired.

He shows up in places the world considers insignificant.

And he speaks life.

Not always loudly.

Not always immediately.

But faithfully.

The healing in these stories isn't just about bodies. It's about trust.

Trust that God is still working.

Trust that God's love isn't bound by our timelines.

Trust that even when we don't see it yet, life is already moving.

And here's the good news:

We don't heal ourselves.

We don't earn it.

We don't get it right enough.

Jesus does the work.

So whether today you feel like the parent walking home with nothing but a promise...

or like the man who has waited so long you're not sure hope is worth it anymore...

Jesus meets you there.

He meets us here.

And he says, again and again:

Go. Rise. Live.

Because God is still working.

And God is still bringing life.

Amen.