

The healing at the pool of Bethesda



John 5

In front of Jerusalem's city gates was the pool of Bethesda. There lay many sick people. In those days the Jewish people considered illnesses to be caused by sin. When the water of the pool was disturbed, the sick stepped into it believing that they would be healed.

A certain lame man had been lying there for 38 years. Nobody helped him into the water. Jesus Christ took pity on him and healed him ignoring the law forbidding this on the Sabbath.

The children learn that Jesus Christ also turns to and takes pity on the sick.
He has power to draw people out of their loneliness and hopelessness.

Anna no longer feels like playing. She wants to go and visit her neighbour—an elderly man. He always has plenty of time and loves to tell her about his life. Anna quickly runs across the road to a tiny house. An old man welcomes her with a smile and it is clear to see that he is delighted at her visit. He wipes his dirty hands and together they go and sit on a bench. The little girl's eyes sparkle in anticipation. "Please tell me again how you were healed," she pleads. "I will gladly tell you," answers the man. "I was very ill for 38 years ... I could not walk, I was lame."
"Could you not even take a single step? Couldn't you at least sit up?" The old man shakes his head. "I had to drag myself as best I could."
"You must often have been very sad," Anna remarks thoughtfully. "Yes, and I was nearly always alone. But the thought that God might not love me, was the worst. I asked myself over and over: Why must I have these lame, useless legs? Have I done something wrong?
Is that why most people want nothing to do with me? These questions gave me no peace."
"Did you have to suffer like that because God did not love you?"

"Of course not, but I did not understand that at the time. Well, some kind people finally brought me to the pool of Bethesda. It is a very special place. Do you know what is said about it?"
"Yes, its water is disturbed sometimes and whoever goes in is healed."

"Yes, this water must at times have some very special healing properties. Many sick people are actually healed there. Sometimes the water suddenly starts bubbling up. Those who enter it then say that it is quite warm. Many have found relief from their pain in it. Unfortunately I did not have anybody to carry me into the water. So I had to sit there year after year and wait ... At times I almost despaired. There were many other sick people and we tried to comfort one another."

"And then the Lord Jesus came?"

"Yes. But I did not know him. On that particular day there were many people where I lay. The people who walked past me avoided my pleading gaze. Eventually I did not want to look up any more. I felt so completely disheartened. Suddenly a man stood before me. He looked straight into my eyes. For the first time in a long, long time I felt that someone had noticed me, that someone had compassion with me. He asked me: 'Do you want to be healed?' I could not even imagine such a thing, so I answered: 'There is nobody who will help me into the water. That is why I will probably never be healed.' But the Lord Jesus said to me: 'Rise, take your bed and walk.' At that same moment I felt a great power surging through my legs. I got up and took my mat. I could stand ... yes, even

Jesus Christ is everybody's friend

walk! I wanted to thank the man, but he had already disappeared in the crowd. I was completely overwhelmed by the joy of it all! I had to tell someone of my experience. I stumbled through the crowd with my bundle and just couldn't believe what had happened! I could stand again! I could walk again! I was healed! So God did love me after all! I suddenly knew this with great certainty. I hurried to the temple. I wanted to thank God for my miraculous recovery. There, in the temple, I saw the man again who had healed me. I went to him and thanked him. He said to me: 'Now that you are healthy, make sure that you continue to live in a way which is pleasing to God. Then things will go well for you.'

"Since that day I am happy again. I cannot forget the Lord Je-

sus; I am with him as often as possible. I would like to become more like him."

"Is that why you visit the sick," Anna asks. "Yes, I want to tell them that God loves them and that they must not despair. Apart from that, it brings me joy to make them happy. So, now I have told you everything. Go and play with the other children." The little girl remains seated, many thoughts going through her mind.

2/3



A man was lame. He had lost all hope. Then the Lord Jesus came and healed him. The man could walk again! He was overjoyed and thanked God.



Jesus Christ comforts and heals also today.

- 1 We encourage the children to speak of their experiences with illness. Then we look at the photograph. The children will surely see that this elderly brother is seriously ill. We try to imagine what a visit by a minister would mean for him. After a few brief sentences, we commence the story: Jesus Christ comforted many sick people; some he even healed. Anna, a young girl who lived in Jerusalem many years ago, had heard of this.
- 2 The children describe the drawing. They try to place themselves into the healed man's position and retell his conversation with the Lord Jesus.
- 3 We look at the photograph and try to imagine how this old man must be feeling. (He must suffer from serious infirmities, yet it comforts him to experience that he is being prayed for and that he has not been forgotten in his difficult circumstances. The meeting with the Priest gives him hope and confidence. He knows that the most important thing is spiritual care as the soul lives for ever. The body, even if healthy, is mortal.