

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightfordarktimes.com

Wise as Serpents – A Practical Theology of Evil

(Part 4 – Christ Our Healer)

January 3, 2016

Sermon Text: John 5:1-18

Scripture Reading: John 5:1-18

Introduction-

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 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?"

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." Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. 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." But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." This was why the Jews were seeking

all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. (Joh 5:1-18)

This is the first Lord's Day of a new year and we are all one year closer to seeing Christ face to face than we were at this time last New Year's. Each one of our earthly lives are one year shorter than they were then. It is fitting that we put some questions to ourselves in regard to how we spent these last 365 days the Lord granted us, and more importantly, how we intend to spend the coming 365 which lie ahead of us. When it comes to the stewardship of the time entrusted to us by the Lord, we are much like those servants of that master so long ago who went away, but first entrusted his servants with money to invest-

He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first

came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'" (Luk 19:12-27)

The Lord has entrusted us with many things, all of which are to be faithfully used for His glory.

We would do well this morning to heed these words, and take them to heart:

"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Luk 12:35-40)

It is our purpose then this morning to think on these things, and I specifically want to call our attention to the words that Jesus spoke to the lame man there at the pool of Bethesda:

"Do you want to be healed?"

I want to challenge each of us to put this question to ourselves, and I want to do so for the primary purpose of *encouraging* us to see that Jesus Christ is our Healer, that He is able and He is willing to set us free from enslavement to the bondage that comes with being deceived by lies of the enemy. If these words convict you genuinely, and you realize that you need to repent of some sin of your own, then please do so. But primarily our purpose today is to confidently assert that Christ most certainly sets all who call on Him free of all falsehoods we might be clinging to this morning. All we need do is ask.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

And so we ask ourselves this question: How badly do we really want Christ to heal us? To change us? Did we want this for ourselves in 2015, and do we really want His healing in the year to come? As we learn more and more about the nature and tactics of evil, it is vital that we understand that Christ is King and that no evil exists that is beyond His ability to conquer. We also need to be very clear-sighted about the fact that wickedness and its representatives will do all they can to prevent us from being free.

The question again:

“Do you want to be healed?”

The question *seems* like a no-brainer, right? Of course the man lame for 38 long years wanted to be healed, didn't he? And yet Jesus put the question to him. For 38 years, almost 4 decades, this man had lived lame. He had grown accustomed. He had made adjustments. He had a routine. Maybe his infirmity paid him some benefits? Pity. Alms. Or maybe he just figured – “this is it. This is my life. Nothing's going to change.”

I want to tell you this morning that *change and freedom are the very nature of life in Christ.*

I. The Bondage of Sin

All through the Bible, sin is presented to us as the great enslaver. We see it in the person of Pharaoh, for example, in Exodus:

So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. (Exo 1:13-14)

Every attempt at freedom was met with even more severe oppression.

Throughout its history, enemies worked to enslave and oppress the Jewish nation – Moabites, Ammonites, Hittites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians and then the Roman Empire. All of these oppressors are images of sin. Sin is the greatest slave master:

They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (Joh 8:33-34)

As human beings living out our earthly lives in this sinful, fallen creation, we not only have our own sin to deal with, *but we have the effects of the sins of others upon us.* Sanctification in the Christian, this growth into more of the image of Christ and His holiness, is largely a matter of being set free from sin and its effects. Redemption is a redeeming from the power and effects of sin. But growth in Christ involves being made to see truth more and more clearly. Coming to know God's will for us more accurately. Learning more perfectly what is pleasing to Him. All of this is freeing. It sets us free. This means, once more, being set free from not only our own sin, but from the effects of the sin of *others* upon us. Think on this. The Bible does tell us to put to death our own sin, by the Spirit

in us. But it also just a frequently tells us to do things like:

- Test the spirits to see if they are from God
- Do not even eat with such a person who claims to be a Christian but walks habitually in wickedness
- Do not permit anyone to bring you into bondage by deceiving you with a false gospel
- Do not permit a Diotrefes to lord it over you, especially in the church

Why? So that we are not brought into bondage by their lies.

But the question I put to you this morning, to repeat it still another time, is - *“Do you want to be healed?”* Do you *want* Christ to set you free?

The Kinds of Bondage We Face

As we have pointed out, sin enslaves and it is vital that we understand all the ways that it does. Hear this again: it is not just our own sin which every Christian battles that works to hold us in bondage, but it is the effects of the sin of others that so often keeps us in its power. We can be free of it. For example:

- Many people suffer from trauma, the effects of it, often called

PTSD. This is not due to their own sin (in spite of the claims of some schools of so-called Christian counseling that our problems are ultimately due to our own sin). A soldier returning home from the war, for example, and suffering the paralyzing effects of that trauma, suffers from the sin and evil of others. So do many of the people who come to our ACFJ website seeking help.

- People who were abused as children suffer many kinds of enslaving effects because of this evil at the hands of others
- False teaching, false religious leaders, and other lies enslave us.
- The narcissist, the sociopathic wicked person – these are people who enslave others through their evil behavior and words

Remember, and think on this very, very carefully – *the primary enemies and the fundamental sources of enslaving evil in the Bible and thus today have always been the counterfeits in the visible church. Always. Professing Christians. The false prophets in Israel. The serpent in the garden. Judas. Scribes and Pharisees. The anti-Christ.*

Listen to these real examples of the very kinds of slavery we need to get free of, *and which Christ is able and willing to free us from*. As you listen, think about:

- Where did the enslaving lies come from that held these people in bondage?
- How were these people ultimately healed and set free?

I was friends with a Christian guy who I eventually learned was heavily influenced by Doug Wilson and John Piper. He told me that my Converse tennis shoes and jeans were "worldly" I have always dressed modestly so that kind of shocked me at the time. My version of modest and his were two different things apparently. I know so many people who are married to these kinds of individuals and they twist the legalism and bondage they live under into some kind of godliness and condemn anyone, especially women who disagree with them as disobedient Christians or worse. They have been brainwashed. Makes me very angry.

This one exemplifies what we are trying to be encouraged to do ourselves this morning:

My prayer for 2016. Open my eyes, omniscient God, to see truth, to see counterfeit, and to know the

difference. Encourage my heart toward boldness to stand for truth and to boldly stand up to the counterfeit. Thank you, God, for all that I have learned, the last couple of years, through the diligent work of ACFJ. May your blessing and favor continue to rest on this, your, vital ministry.

NOTE: In this following illustration, think of the abuser as any evil person, a child of the devil, who will try to come into your life and enslave you -

Thank you for such concise, clear words about something that sounds so spiritual but is a diabolical trap. The sin inspectors—I know them so well! Beware of them, I realize I have a “friend” in my life that is a sin inspector. They are steeped in darkness because their pride of putting themselves in the place of God they project their sin on their victims. They swallow the camel of their sin of abuse while straining at the gnat in their victims.

It doesn't matter what corner of the world you are from, abusers all have the same pattern, they seek to enslave their victims! I had a sin corrector husband that spent 20 years daily looking for things I needed to repent of. Taught that he was the voice of God in my life from the patriarchal church and my narcissistic

scapegoating family of origin; I was steeped in deep shame. *He'd tell me what my motives were and why they were wrong until I didn't know what I thought anymore.*

Love, pain and servitude all seemed tightly bound to each other and life was nothing but burdensome. Seeking for meaning outside of my marriage by helping other women in a ministry that spontaneously found me brought the church down on my head. They rebuked me and told me I needed to be a keeper at home.

They told my then husband/god if I didn't stay at home we'd be thrown out of the church. I think in retrospect that the other wives were jealous that community women were calling on me for assistance. It disturbed our slavery to our husbands and living for their whims if I had anything outside of my house happening. It wasn't until after 20 years of spirit breaking and a nervous breakdown from the shame of being the family sin "eater" that the thought "I'm a slave" came to my mind.

The truth sets you free. The good news about this is that my sensitivity is raised when I hear, see, sense, taste or get within 50 feet of slavemakers I know it.

Here is still another. While these examples are set in the arena of marriage, notice that these same kinds of evil dynamics could play themselves out in some other relationship in our lives – at work, with another family member, and particularly common is in regard to some professing "Christian" -

I only had one example of a "Christian" marriage growing up. I was TOLD this was a good marriage, but what I saw was a woman who exemplified "perfection" but was obviously hopeless and depressed. She was musically gifted and played a variety of instruments, was active in all church activities, played guitar on the church bus every Sunday, held Good News Clubs meetings monthly in the local projects (this is how I came to the Lord), got her education (against her husband's wishes) and became a teacher, cared for her selfish mother until her death and entertained all her family members. She happened to be a relative of mine.

Her husband lied to her, called her names, tried to keep her poor, used her gifts to glorify himself, constantly incited fear within her by pointing out all her flaws and how others would perceive her to be selfish etc. The abuse she endured actually turned me off to a "Christian" marriage because I knew I could never be "good" enough

if this was the standard that needed to be achieved in order to be in a Christian marriage. So instead, I married what I thought was a “good” man.

I have since read countless books on marriage, taken classes etc., etc., but NONE of them provided me with truth. *It was only after God tore down all the lies in my life was it revealed that everything I had been taught about a Biblical marriage was actually a gross pervasion of what the Bible said.* This evil deception was concocted in the brains of *those who feel no love towards others* but who secretly desire to manipulate those who they believe they “own” and to also be worshiped by them. People like me who have a sincere desire to serve the Lord and desire to give genuine love to others, are the ones who are so deeply destroyed by this evil. ***This is right up Satan’s alley. To have God’s genuine people serving HIS evil children.***

NOTE: She continues on here and I want to emphasize that his is not a woman who is rebelling against the Lord and simply does not want to “work” at her marriage. On the contrary, she is zealous to serve Him no matter the cost. She is simply sharing with us here how she came to real freedom.

I know that Proverbs 31 is a trigger for many women because the church has used it to control them, but for me this passage shows how evil my husband is and also all men who employ control over their wives are. When I read it I see a woman who loves the Lord and is free to do this because her husband is also a man of God and is wise enough to love and admire her and her heart and so leaves her alone yet supports her so she can serve God in the way she was created to do. He is proud of her success and counts himself blessed and realizes that part of the reason he is admired at the city gate is because he has such a kickin’ wife! There’s no talk of him trying to implement control, him telling her that she should be this or do that but instead he actively loves her by telling her how grateful he is and beautiful she is in the Lord! Not one derogatory comment; just rapt admiration and gratefulness. No getting in the way of the many gifts God has given her that are clearly meant to glorify the Lord and also be blessings to all who are in her care.

It [Proverbs 31] is a measuring stick that can be used to assess THE HUSBAND as a man of God, not the wife. Is he such a man of God that he knows that the Lord is actively working in his wife’s live as He is working in his own and that God has a unique walk for each of His children

and that we are to be helpmates for each other not owners? Is her energy sapped because Mr. Husband MUST be worshiped or is her energy being enlivened by a helping, LOVING husband who knows they are co-heirs in the Lord? Can he compile such a thoughtful list? Meaning, can he SEE the many things his wife has done or can he only think of the negative things? Or does he need to have a list of equal amounts negative in order to allow her to get credit for any positive thing? Does he need to include himself in her successes or can he do as the author in Proverbs 31 has done and solely list his wife's successes?

Thank you for yet another topic to help us see where evil lurks and how it destroys God's children. I'm grateful!

Is your head spinning yet? Here is another:

The thing is that there are oftentimes decades of abuse that have been heaped on people with a heart to love and *they have no idea about the truth of scripture and as a result believe they are doing "right" by taking direction from their "Christian" spouse or church.* It is rarely as cut and dried a "we must all take responsibility for our own actions."

I was raised around people who attended AA-type meetings. If you're familiar with this type of cult, they are always teaching that you are responsible for your own actions. *So I was raised to never blame others and always blame myself.* The problem is that the people around me were actually abusers and they found covert ways to abuse me and they never saw themselves as abusers. *I was so brain-washed to NEVER blame others and as a result, I couldn't see that I was being abused. Can you see how it's all intertwined?*

We must first acknowledge that some people are abusers [ie, that some people are simply, EVIL] (even if they never hit or physically harm someone) and educate people. (A person with an abusive mindset is different than someone who has been abused and is acting out.) Then we must help their victims through education about abusers, [about EVIL] *help them to see how they may have been raised to become victims of abusers, and then how to learn to live as a child of God without catering to evil.* George Simon's books are a good place to start to see how these evil ones operate. Dr. Robert Hare also has a good book and some videos on Youtube. *Once you see how these evil people must always control and manipulate others, with no truth and constant hatred, on top of a church and society that denies that*

some people are evil, you can see how we end up in situations like this.

Before we demand that people MUST take responsibility for their own actions, we must first ensure that they know the truth about evil and how abusers operate, Then we can start to sort out how abuse has affected the victims, *so that they can start to hear and feel the Word of God in their hearts and minds instead of the rules created by men that they've been following.* It's often a slow process but worth every second spent on helping God's little ones heal.

See it? False religion. Twisting of God's Word. Enslavement. These people tell how it was ultimately Christ's truth that set them free. And I am asking each one of us this morning

—

“Do you want to be healed?”

Of all the junk in your thoughts? Of all the false notions that you have embraced? Of all the things you have been blinded to? Of the false Christians in your life who keep whispering the lies of the enemy in your ear? Do you want it? Do you want your life to be radically changed?

Because, and here is the vital thing, *Christ is able and Christ is willing to free you.* The question is, do you want

Him to do so? Do you want to be delivered from that comfy mat you have sat on by the pool for 38 years? Really? Do you really want Him to do this by showing you what it really is? Do you want to know the truth about the people around you in your life who are holding you in slavery no matter who they are? Do you want to know what lies have come into your life over the years even if it means coming to see that someone you thought was a great saint of the church, isn't?

You see, if we really don't want to be free, then Christ isn't going to set us free. And I have known more than one professing Christian who simply was not ready for freedom, did not want it, and ran from it as something just too threatening to deal with.

They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." (Exo 14:11-12)

II. Christ is Able and Christ is Willing

Consider now very carefully the following accounts of Jesus healing people. Think on this. Listen to what He says. The message is plain. Christ is able and Christ is willing to set YOU free from all the things that evil is oppressing you through. Christ, the Light of the world, is able to shine through the darkness so that we can see and hear. The question is, do you want to? Do you want to be set free in 2016? He came for this very purpose:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, (Luk 4:18)

When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (Mat 8:1-3)

And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, "If I

only touch his garment, I will be made well."

Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district.

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, "See that no one knows about it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled,

saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel."

But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Mat 9:19-36)

Christ did all this. Christ is able, Christ is willing. There is NOTHING in your life and mind and heart that Christ cannot heal and set right. Nothing. Many people have gone to counselors and therapists for a long, long while. In some cases this has provided some help, but ultimately, I can tell you this,

It is Jesus Christ alone who turns on the lights in your mind, shows you the lies you have embraced, shows you the reality that you have been blind to, and replaces all that mess with His truth, setting you free.

You heard that theme in these first hand accounts, didn't you? Over and over again we hear it. "One day, I saw for the first time....".

That is how this ministry of A Cry for Justice began. The lights came on about the nature and tactics of evil. Christ did it. He showed us and He delivered us from bondage to lies and wickedness that had deceived us for a long, long time.

Now, finally -

III. Evil Will Scream and Fight and Protest our Freedom

Evil hates freedom. Evil always works to enslave. Evil lusts for power and control, and therefore evil and its minions hate Jesus Christ, the one who sets men free. Expect it. When the captives are set free, Pharaoh inevitably sets his armies to chase after them and bring them back to slavery. See it:

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. The Egyptians pursued

them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon. (Exo 14:5-9)

Matt 9 - But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. (Joh 5:15-16)

Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. (Joh 9:14-16)

See? Evil lays rather dormant when it has victims in its power. But when light comes and its power is threatened, wickedness springs into action. We must be wise to this tactic and we must expect this final "Battle

of the Bulge" final desperate attempt by the enemy to renew its grasp on us.

Here is a clear example:

Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" (Rev 12:12)

So there it is. Christ is able and Christ is willing to set you free, to heal you, to open your eyes and ears to His truth, to expose all and any lies you have been taught to believe. In fact, He is the ONLY one who can do this.

Do you want Him to? There is the question you see. If you do, if you will believe that He can, and you begin to call out to Him to change you and free you no matter what the cost, be assured that He will. And by the time 2017 rolls around as a new year, you will be able to look back and see what great things He has done for you.