

Sermon Title: God Is at Work

7/19/2026

The Key Passage: John 15: 16-30 (NIV)

¹⁶ So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷ In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” ¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.

²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from

death to life. ²⁵Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

The context for our primary passage today is verses 1-15 of John chapter 5. Jesus has just healed a man at the pool called Bethesda who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus asked this man a compelling question. Do you want to get well? It might seem obvious at first that the answer to the question would be yes. Why wouldn't someone want to be healed? But this question reveals that the answer to the question could be no. Why? There's a cost to being healed.

There're new roles, new expectations. To be healed requires throwing off learned helplessness, and lack of agency. It's a question we need to wrestle with when there are areas in our

lives that are crippled. Do you want to get well? Are you willing to take on the obligations that come with being healed? This morning, I want to challenge us all to take a hard look at places where we've been stuck or stymied. I want to challenge us all to let go of false remedies that have been ineffective for decades.

To be healed requires us to admit that we're broken. For the man at the pool, his brokenness was obvious. For some of us, the broken areas are hidden. We may have stuffed down our emotions, unwilling to face the fact that we're hurt and the trauma we've endured. Or we may be ones that lash out in anger in response to our pain unwilling to admit the harm we're causing. Hurt people hurt people. Not only for ourselves but for others we want to help, we need to ask the question do you want to be healed? We can't want another's healing more than they want it for themselves.

You need to recognize that with healing new demands will be placed on you that aren't placed when you're disabled or infirmed. You'll be expected to carry your load – physically, emotionally, financially, relationally. Do you want to be healed? The other question is do you need some help? This man had no one to help him but languished for 38 years. If you need help, don't stay where no help is provided.

Our primary passage today picks up after Jesus commanded the man who was healed to pick up his mat and walk.

It was this command that raised the ire of the Jewish leaders. Why? Because the healing took place on a Sabbath and this act of taking up his bed and walking represented doing work. Doing work was prohibited on the Sabbath. Let's take a look at the origins of this. The creation account in Genesis concluded with this: Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV)

²By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

God had been busy working but on the seventh day he rested from his work. The word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word Shabbat meaning "to cease" or "to rest". Sabbath starts at sunset on Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday evening. In Leviticus 23:3 (NIV), the Lord commanded Moses to speak to the Israelites:³ "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the LORD.

In his defense for what he did on the Sabbath, Jesus said "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am

working.” There are two key points I want to highlight here: First, Jesus calls God “My Father”. By referring to God as My Father, Jesus infuriated the Jewish leaders because they understood that Jesus was saying he was equal to God. Second, Jesus says My Father is always at his work to this very day and I too am working. Furthermore, whatever the Father does the Son also does; the Father loves the Son, shows him all he does and is going to show him even greater works.

The theologian NT Wright had a brilliant insight about what this work on the Sabbath represented. The sabbath signified that God had previously been about the work of creation and after that work of creation was completed, He rested. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus was saying that God was not resting; God was engaged in a work of new creation and Jesus was about that work. That work of new creation was healing the world. Jesus said even greater works than these will be shown so that you will be amazed. As followers of Jesus, we follow his example.

Since Jesus is at work; we’re to be at work. How do we recognize God at work? Through His Spirit, God guides us to recognize where He is at work and invites us to join Him in what He is doing. God speaks to us through prayer, His Word, and the circumstances of our lives. God’s activity in

the world reflects who He is. Everything He does is shaped by His compassion, grace, patience, steadfast love, and unwavering faithfulness. His purpose is to restore what is broken, reconcile people to Himself and one another, establish justice, and ultimately renew all creation.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. One of the clearest ways to recognize God's work is through the Fruit of the Spirit.

Wherever God's Spirit is transforming lives, the character of Jesus becomes evident through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As we seek to understand God's activity, we should evaluate every situation through the lens of His character of love, and justice and ongoing work of redeeming people and creation.

We can also identify God's kingdom at work wherever we see signs of new creation through the work of his people—communities becoming healthier, broken relationships being reconciled, divisions giving way to mutual respect, and people choosing forgiveness, mercy, and hope over conflict and despair. These glimpses point to God's continuing work of making all things new. I'm going to share a Bible Project video:

<https://youtu.be/YbipxLDtY8c?si=mjpib1y5BxK8F3Vh>

One of the ways God spoke to me recently was through circumstances. For several years I've been part of a program focused on mental health and healing from trauma. It occurred to me that the program could potentially be expanded beyond its current community-based venue to a new population. When I approached the leaders of the program, they immediately sensed God at work because they had been thinking about expanding the program to this population as well and were planning a brainstorming session.

One person I invited to the brainstorming session couldn't make it and another passed on the opportunity. However, at a party, I ran into a woman I hadn't seen in about a decade. As we were catching up, I learned about the work she was doing. It was a perfect fit for the new population we were thinking about, and I invited her to attend the brainstorming session. She attended and brought along a colleague who it turns out had a connection with another participant. They both shared valuable perspectives. In our sharing at the end of the day, we all marveled – what are the odds that I would

run into someone at a party that I hadn't seen in 10 years just in time to invite her to participate in this session? Clearly God was at work. God creates opportunities and we need to take action. The passage also notes the following:

- The Father raises the dead and gives them life.
- The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.
- Jesus is the Son of Man and has authority to judge.

- The dead who have done what is good will rise to life, those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

Let's look again at the description of The Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14 (NIV) and his authority:

¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Whoever hears Jesus's words and believes God who sent him has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Eternal life is not a nonphysical existence in a distant heaven. In the fulfillment of His kingdom, heaven and earth will be united, and God will dwell fully with His people in a renewed world. God's plan is to restore His entire creation. This new life begins even now. Through faith in Jesus Christ, people enter into a restored relationship with God and begin experiencing the transforming power of His kingdom.

Yet its fullness still lies ahead, when Christ returns. Eternal life is the "age to come"—God's promised future that has already begun to break into history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. By the power of the Spirit, believers experience the first signs of that future today while looking forward to its complete fulfillment. The Christian hope is not that believers will leave earth for heaven forever. Rather, those who die in Christ are with Him until the day of resurrection, when God will renew creation and raise His people to live bodily in the new heavens and new earth.

Eternal life is therefore defined not only by its unending duration but also by its completely transformed character. It is an intimate knowledge of God. John 17:3 (NIV) ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. It is life made whole as God intended from the beginning—a restored humanity living in perfect fellowship with Him within a renewed creation. In that renewed world, God's people will joyfully reflect His character and participate in His everlasting purposes of righteousness, peace, beauty, and flourishing. We experience healing and extend healing to others as we obey God's command to make disciples of all nations.