

Jesus is the Prince of Peace

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Preacher: Robin Silson

[0:00] We were looking at this verse that comes in Isaiah 9 about four titles of Jesus. and we looked at that he's the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father,! and we're on Prince of Peace today.

And so the way that we're doing it is we're looking at Jesus' life and see how he, once he grows up, how he fulfills these titles in his life. So we're going to do that by looking at John chapter 5, from verses 1 to 15.

If you've got a Bible in your chair pew, we don't have pews here, then you can just turn to it. It's on page 1068, it's from verse 5, chapter 5, 1 to 15.

I'm going to pray, and then we're going to think about that a little bit. Let me pray. Almighty God, we thank you for the Bible. We thank you that this is the way that you have decided to speak to us.

And we thank you that it's not a dead word, but it's a living word, and you make it alive by your Spirit at work in our hearts. And this is how we encounter you, Lord. And so I pray that you'd give us a fresh encounter, a fresh understanding, a fresh awareness of you, and that you'd speak to us powerfully about ourselves and about who you are, about our lives, and help us to live as your chosen people.

[1:23] And so we ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. So I mentioned before Christmas, we were looking at who is the Christ of Christmas. And I don't know, it feels like a long time since Christmas now.

But as we begin 2026, like I've mentioned already, the Christ of Christmas is no less a relevant question. But as we think about this morning, you know, I think it has perhaps changed from before in December.

But perhaps now, maybe a better question of who is the Christ of Christmas is, who do we think, or who do we want Jesus to be for us in the year that lies ahead?

New year, and you know, we're 11 days in. But it's always a time for me, I have two times of the year, I have like the academic year, like August when we look back, and I look back.

January is another time, look back at the previous 12 months, but look ahead and reminisce about the good and the bad about what's gone on before, but also look forward to what's coming and what lies ahead. And so maybe this is a time to do that.

[2:29] I mentioned that verse Isaiah 9, 6, we're on Prince Jesus is the Prince of Peace today. I think it's actually the way that, you know, God's always one step ahead of us, and I think it's fitting that this is the title of Jesus that we have to look at in the new year.

Because who in the world doesn't want to have a year that's full of peace? I know that that's what I want, to have a peaceful year. We want 2026 to be a peaceful year in our own lives.

We'd like to see a bit more peace in the world. And this is who Jesus is. He's the Prince of Peace. And we see it in his earthly life. Before we jump into an example of that in John 5, I just want to dig into that title a little bit, The Prince of Peace, and what it means.

Because in the book of Isaiah, when it says that Prince of Peace, you know, princes, they're more than just sons waiting to take the throne. Prince of Peace. Prince of Peace.

Princes, in the book of Isaiah, are commanders. They're men who have authority, who govern armies. It's significant because it means that Jesus is not, he is a peaceful man, but he's more than that in himself.

[3 : 43] It means that Jesus commands peace. He's a commander of peace, a Prince of Peace, who has authority to bring peace, to send it wherever he wants. Peace, as an entity, is at the beck and call of Jesus.

That's what it means, that Jesus is a Prince of Peace. What about that? So that's kind of where we get the Prince bit. What about the word peace though? Biblical peace is not just being calm.

Biblical peace is a kind of complete, comprehensive wholeness. A wholeness of your body, mind, soul, and in your relationships.

It's more than just kind of being relaxed on a sunbed and not having any worries. Although that is pretty peaceful. It is total, comprehensive wholeness of every part of your being, of your life.

It's that word I mentioned, we saw it in Isaiah a few weeks ago actually, it's the word shalom. When Jesus commands peace, the word shalom in Hebrew, he's able to bring a wholeness and fix every part of us.

[4 : 55] In today's reading in John 5, we're going to meet a man who has no peace. And he puts that lack of peace down to his disability.

And for 38 years, we're going to see that he's been attempting to manufacture it, to try and make himself whole. But the peace he needs, the shalom you might say that he needs, is a much deeper work.

Because the reality is, the problem is much deeper than just his disability. Now we might not have that physical disability, but we are complex individuals, right?

And often, we think that our, when we go, when we don't have peace, that our lack of peace can be fixed just by a change in circumstances. If once I get this thing, or that thing, or change this part of my life, then I'll experience that peace.

But changing circumstances, it makes you feel like kind of temporary calm, but it's only temporary, it's only momentary. It's kind of a manufactured peace that has a shelf life.

[6 : 06] It disappears once the trouble comes, or it difficultly comes again. And we live, don't we, in this kind of endless flipping peace to no peace, peace to no peace. The truth is, there is no formula.

There is no, there is no formula to feel complete. There's no magic trick. True peace that is, the true peace that we need, really, that is not affected by circumstance, can only be found in a person.

Today at the start, well, today, I'll say at the start, 11 days into the new year, we get to think about the new year, and start in the way that we want to continue. And I wonder, I just wonder if this might be perhaps, it's one of mine that I've been thinking about.

A long time before I even came to this passage, I was thinking about this word, and thinking that, would 2026 be the year where we think, this is the year of kind of, where I want peace, shalom, to be who I am, like it's part of who I am, that I would, that we'd stop manufacturing shallow peace, and receive true and lasting, shalom peace in every part of our being, that is bigger than circumstance.

Let's see how Jesus, the Prince of Peace, commands it, for this broken man in John 5. So this is God's word. John 5, starting from verse 1.

[7:36] Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem, near the sheep get a pool, which in Aramaic, is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.

Here a great number of disabled people, used to lie, the blind, the lame, the paralysed. One who was there, had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and learned that he had been in this condition, for a long time, he asked him, do you want to get well?

Sir, the invalid replied, I have no one to help me into the pool, when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, get up, pick up your mat and walk.

At once the man was cured, he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place, was the Sabbath. And so the Jewish leader said to the man who'd been healed, it's the Sabbath.

The Lord forbids you to carry your mat. But he replied, the man who made me well said to me, pick up your mat and walk. So they asked him, who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?

[8:47] The man who was healed, the man who was healed, had no idea who it was. For Jesus slipped away at the crowd that was there. Later, Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, see, you're well again.

Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. The pool of Bethesda, it's not a scene of life-giving water, it's kind of a scene of stagnation.

What's kind of ironic is that Bethesda means house of mercy. Yet for this man, for 38 years, it's been nothing but a house of misery.

It's like a cruel joke, isn't it? Go to the house of mercy and receive misery. Surrounded, and he's not his own, surrounded by suffering people, all of them clutching at straws.

To top it off, that is not where the problems end for this man. The Jewish view of suffering was that people who were invalids, disabled, were cursed by God.

[9:59] To his countrymen, who walked past him and ignored him every day, they would have thought he deserved it for something he'd done in his past. And remember, as we've mentioned, this has been going on for 38 years.

It's a long time to wait. You can only imagine what that wait has done, not to his, kind of, you know, physically, that's a long time to wait, but you can only imagine as that time has progressed over his life, what that has done to his mental health, his emotional well-being.

Clearly, he has lost hope of ever being restored. Because now, he just sits waiting, presuming no one will help. Because that's the way it is, and no one ever has.

Here is a man who is hopeless, he's probably quite depressed, and feels like he's worth nothing. He's nothing, feels like he's nothing in society, and probably nothing to God.

His paralysis is not exclusive just to his physical ability. He's not just physically paralyzed, but he's emotionally paralyzed.

[11:10] He's bitter at hiding and in despair. He's relationally paralyzed. He's ostracized and marginalized and looked down on. His bitterness probably now prevents him from seeking connection.

Jesus steps into the man's darkness and asks him a question. Do you want to get well? His answer shows that his problem is more than just physical, because he makes an absolute statement.

See what he says in verse 7? Sir, I have no one to help me. I've got no one. It's like a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, isn't it?

He believes no one cares, and when they don't, it confirms his bias against everyone else. See? I knew no one cared about me. I've got no one. And we now see that he is, not only is he physically paralyzed, he's spiritually paralyzed because he believes the pool is magic and has spiritual power to make him whole.

He's retreated to a magic pool to manufacture wholeness, believing that if he gets in the water, it has to be a certain time, it has to be while it's stirred, just get him, don't just get him when it's still, that would be ridiculous.

[12:37] No, he has to get him while it's stirred, and then that will make him well. It's a false hope. He doesn't ask, and notice, he's not been asking anyone to help him, because not only is he spiritually paralyzed, physically, he's got emotional and relational paralysis.

He won't speak to the community, because they've rejected him. The reality is that this man needs a deeper solution than on face value. It's so much, so much a bigger problem.

Don't know if you've had that experience, well, we've all had that experience, maybe driving, when the warning, you get different warning lights come on your dashboard, and maybe you know what each of those lights mean.

I don't. I reckon most people don't know exactly what, you just, I seem to get like a new light that comes on every now and then, and I'm thinking like, what on earth does that mean?

I've got no idea. And it always comes on at the most inconvenient of times. But the reason that the light comes on is inconvenient, but it's there as a warning sign, isn't it, that you need to go get it checked out.

[13:44] you need to go check out what the problem is with your car, that's why the light comes on. You could, if you wanted to, you could get some like black masking tape and just put it over the light and ignore it.

But we all know that that's going to, it's foolish, isn't it, to put a piece of sticky tip so you can't see the light anymore. That would end in disaster. Just because you can't see what's underneath the bonnet doesn't make the problem go away.

And changing the circumstance, removing the warning sign doesn't fix the car. When we lack peace, we should treat that as a warning sign.

And know that maybe we need a bit more than a bit of tape, a bit more than a change in our circumstance to make things right. That maybe there's always more that's going on under the bonnet in our hearts.

And the root of it we either probably don't understand or we've forgotten or are too complex to know who we are on the inside. We do the same like this man we attempted to make absolute statements.

[15:06] I have no one. And when we make those statements it limits us and we don't realise what's going on under the bonnet. Have you ever caught yourself making those kind of negative assertions?

I have no one. I'll never amount to anything. I have no real purpose in life. I'll never get through this. That relationship will never be restored.

My health's too bad for me ever to be okay again. I've been too bad and I don't deserve to be loved. our absolute statements underneath the bonnet of our hearts is what we actually believe about ourselves and that's what really affects our peace.

It's not the thing that we think it is the circumstance it's more than the surface level because it's every part of us and it seeps into our emotions our relationships our spiritual help and it keeps us lacking the peace that we really desire and what happens?

We do what this man does we attempt to fix ourselves like the man thinking he just needs the stirred up magic water we attempt shallow solutions thinking that's all we need in our relationships I'll just take one example relationships you know what do we do either people please to keep everyone on side or distance ourselves from the people that are bad for us perhaps try to be the dominant voice in the room to maintain authority and that's just one example relationships the result is that we really believe that if we control the circumstance our physical bodies our mental energy our relationships if those circumstances are kept in check then only then will we experience wholeness peace and rest we'll just act like the man at the pool waiting for the right stirring to fix the problem 38 years is a long time and I wonder if maybe this resonates quite deeply with us because maybe we've been waiting for a long time and have tried everything for peace and relief and we'd hoped with the things that we've tried that we could manufacture it but what we need is someone to step into our world to speak to us

[17 : 40] Jesus enters this poor man's world look he doesn't wait for the man to ask for help he does the opposite Jesus takes control of the situation and asks the man do you want to get well he shows this man an inherent dignity a dignity that has been stamped on him at conception and that he never loses as an image bearer of God the man by the pool has dismissed humanity as uncaring Jesus shows him he cares deeply he's seen not ignored but honoured this is not an empty shell but an image bearer full of value Jesus stoops down to his level showing he's not less than human can you imagine how that man felt for the first moment of eye contact I matter and you can guess what this man's thinking right finally someone's going to help me into the stirring water finally the lucky break

I've been waiting for all these people going ahead of me come on yeah help me in but Jesus isn't going to help him into the water Jesus isn't going to assist him to a magic myth a fairy tale for healing no Jesus is the one who's going to stand and be the true source of life that the man needs the peace and the shalom this is the gospel that instead of waiting for something to fix our circumstances on the outside the chaos of life Jesus comes into our mess he takes the chaotic mess upon himself and he doesn't just fix the circumstance he fixes us on the inside with himself he opens up the bonnets of our hearts and tells us exactly what we need he says he's saying to the man you don't need to get into the chaotic water to heal to find peace I've entered into the chaos for you that is what happens at the cross that Jesus takes on the chaos and the mess he goes through no peace to give us the peace that we need this moment this encounter with this man he will change forever instead of looking into a pool of stirring water waiting for a lucky break there stands

Jesus he's the person who brings the change commands the man's healing with his voice heals in an instant and what do we see the man believes he sees that Jesus is not a quack offering a temporary solution it's not merely a circumstance change but it's a new life he doesn't respond with verbal kind of faith but the faith that we see is because he doesn't ignore Jesus but he stands he stands he listens and he stands 38 years imagine being there 38 years and somebody says come on get up and he goes alright then he does it because he has faith in Jesus it's a beautiful moment beautiful moment however there is a detail at the end of verse 9 that changes everything there is an interruption that casts a shadow that blinds to the beauty and we see kind of a conflict emerge the end of verse 9 it's like dynamite isn't it spiritual dynamite you see what it says the day on which this took place was a sabbath that last word the sabbath is what lights the fuse and instead of a joyful celebration because of the grace and restoration on display we see two opposing kingdoms come to blows kingdom of heaven and that of the jewish leaders it's a misunderstanding of the sabbath for the jewish leaders sabbath is rules rules that enable them to stay in control in power for jesus sabbath is restoring wholeness restoring life if anything this was the day when healing should be done above all others because it's restoring someone to life grace is the order of the day stopping was necessary as a reminder that they belong to god sabbath really here is like that warning light of grace a reminder that we aren't machines but the pharisees turned the sabbath the warning light into the whole purpose they worship the warning light hating the person who designed the engine these are fake they're not princes at all they're fakes religious leaders they're supposed to act with authority as shepherds they're not princes of peace or shalom but of pressure control and burden whose rule keeping obsessive burdens was not just limited to the sabbath but the entire framework for how they thought jewish life should be lived and we know that because it's not like these paralysed people were new they'd been ignored for years imagine this sheep gate is just like a stone's throw away from the temple the pharisees had walked past this man for 38 years and ignored him and surely they knew that the pool of water was an illusion but they never tried to pull him away from it and here he is healed they should be dancing with joy but instead of dancing with joy they hold an investigation two fronts they hold the investigation one this man shouldn't be healed today and the second one is ridiculous why are you carrying your mat you're not allowed to carry a mat today the conflict is absurd it's absurd but it points actually in seeing the conflict it helps us understand the true meaning of sabbath because it

points to the truth that true sabbath true peace true shalom is not found in rule keeping but again found in a person it's found in the one who makes the man whole the one who restores the man's engine his heart and his life it's called the sheep's gate because it's the entry point for animal sacrifices to enter the temple and here is Jesus walking the path of the lambs that would be brought into the temple to be slaughtered and one day he will be and that is the true means by which he can shepherd and bring the lost sheep to wholeness and now we see a totally different man we see peace shalom impacting every part of his life the burdensome voices of the religious establishment lose their volume this gift of wholeness is more real to him than the world that he'd lived in before we move it's kind of the final point of it that his life is now driven by the peace of God the shalom driven life he's not overawed by the religious elite he's not cowed into a corner by them he answers them straight up it's almost like he sees through their control his physical wholeness is proof that their rules are powerless verse 11 see what he says the man who made me well said to me pick up your mat and walk who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk man had no idea for

Jesus had slipped away you see what he's saying Jesus is the one who tells this man what to do with his legs not then Jesus tells me what to do with my legs commands me it's his voice that's made him walk and they played no part of it he doesn't have a complex argument his testimony of what has happened is his defence against their accusation he's healed physically but notice with me he's healed emotionally because he's able to confront them in his right mind without fear he's healed relationally look where Jesus finds him verse 14 finds him in the temple he's able to worship he's able to stand amongst God's people as one not cursed but as a restored member of the community and then we see he's healed spiritually what Jesus says see yeah well again stop sinning or something worse may happen to you the question we have is what is the something worse now we could be tempted to think that Jesus is just setting up a new set of rules to obey but in reality

[27:08] Jesus is moving here from the temporary to the eternal what he's saying is he doesn't want him to go back and think that life revolves around circumstances it's very much like us isn't it we've been set and been given eternal life and now we the circumstances that we find ourselves are not what dictate or tell us who we are but we're tempted to go back and think that it's all about circumstances don't go back to that he might have his legs back and be completely restored but now he gets to keep following the son of God don't return to your old ways of manufacturing peace that's behind you now this man gets to follow the one who healed him if he turns back he'll receive something far worse than the disability of 38 years but now he lives out the gift of shalom physically emotionally relationally spiritually restored and whole don't go back to that old way this is our

I think this is the opportunity realised for this year like any other year all years there are ups and downs there will be things now maybe that you'd like to change there will be things you want to enjoy there may be times of chaos our prayer is not for a life where everything just runs hunky dory because that's not real is it that's not real but to face it with Jesus beside you that's the prayer that's where true peace comes from why not have a renewed focus this year to don't wait for the stirring if we continue believing that everything will be just fine once that change takes place once we you know it's looking for the temporary solution but the prince of peace is here for you now when you're tempted to make those absolute statements

I will never I am no use I will never the prince of peace is here now and says to you do you want to be well do you want to be whole I'm here for you this year I'm here for you today the mat is an important symbol because the mat is the symbol of this old man's life and he carries it as a symbol that it's gone as we start this year each of us carries a symbolic mat with us it points to what Jesus has done in your life up to now those are moments of grace like this man's mat where we can look back at what Jesus is making us whole and he wants to do that this year let's pray almighty god thank you for your word and oh lord we want that for ourselves this year we want it for ourselves as individuals we want it for our families we want it for our church we want it for our community to experience the wholeness that

Jesus gives the peace with god that flows into every part of our lives to know to feel physically emotionally relationally and spiritually whole you know the areas of our lives where we try to manufacture it where we try to put a sticking plaster over those things in our life and thinking that we'll sort everything out and we just we admit that we know that we do that would you show us what it means to live with the peace the shalom of god and give us a deep and rich contentment in every part of us i ask for this for each one of us and for our community for this year have mercy and bless as we pray in jesus name amen!

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