

Wacky Races

- **Three-legged race**, up sides and then back down main aisle:
 - 2 pairs racing each other...
- **We'll be thinking about someone who was in a race this morning:**
 - not a three-legged race!
 - not a race to win a little prize!
 - and not a race he ever won!
- **Man spent 38 years by a special pool in Jerusalem:**
 - people believed if they got into the pool first when the waters were stirred up they would be healed
 - but this man couldn't get around quickly - and he never won the race
 - for 38 years he had been lying by that pool, waiting, hoping this time he'd win the race...
 - we'll find out what happened when Jesus came to the pool later in the service

Introduction

- What's this story about?
 - at first sight, its about a disabled man's need and subsequent healing
 - but more important than this are people's response to Jesus and who he is

Background

- location (Bethesda, picture?)
- timing (Jewish festival, most likely Shelters or Passover)
- purpose in John's narrative (third of 7 signs showing that Jesus is God)

The man's need

- The man had been ill a long time!
 - it seems he didn't have close family or friends to help him into the pool (v.6,7)
 - he was in need
- We each have needs - sometimes more obvious than other times, to ourselves or to others
 - what are our needs just now? (dwell here for a second to allow people to grapple with this)
 - what are we trying to do about them?
 - example of my own needs, struggles or difficulties - and how knowing needs doesn't always mean we go in a straight line to getting them met!
 - (side-point - if we know others' needs, what are we doing to help them?)

Jesus' response

- It wasn't difficult for Jesus to respond to the man's need (v.8,9)
 - but there's something more important here than just another miracle
 - the sub-text of this whole incident is "who is Jesus?"
 - a text that Jesus himself wrote into the story - inviting people not just to "Wow!" at the miracle, but to ask "who is this man?"
- And its important that as we experience God at work in our lives, meeting our needs:
 - we don't simply accept gratefully
 - but grow in our understanding of who he is, our trust in him, our confidence in him - our relationship with him

The leaders' response

- The Jewish leaders were more bothered about broken rules than about either the healing, or who Jesus was! (v.10-13)
 - so much so that they miss what God was doing in their midst
 - when do we do the same thing? Get caught up in what we think is right or appropriate - even here in church - that we miss what God is doing?

The healed man's response

- Unlike others Jesus healed, we're not told that this man:
 - was healed because of his faith
 - or that he became a believer as a result of his healing (v.14-16)
 - indeed, in v.13 he doesn't know who Jesus is!
 - and when he does find out, he doesn't exactly make things easy for Jesus (v.15)
- Contrast with man born blind (John 9) who in 9:38 says "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.
- What is our response to all Jesus has done for us?
 - are we thankful?

- does it make a difference to the way we live?
- does it make a difference to how we know him, follow him?

The leaders' response to Jesus

- Finally, there is another response mentioned in the passage:
 - not, this time, a response to the man's healing
 - but the response of the leaders to Jesus' final comments, about his Father working on the Sabbath
 - in their eyes, not only had he broken the Sabbath rules (healing the man), now he was claiming to be equal with God!

Our response

- John includes this miracle because of its sub-text:
 - who is Jesus?
 - the Son of God? One with, equal with God?
 - this is the claim, supported by the miracle...
- And Jesus was looking for a response:
 - clear as he finds the man again at the Temple - and implicit in the way he deals with everyone throughout the Gospels
 - looking for that response of acceptance and worship - not just grudgingly given as a *quid pro quo* for a healing or some other provision
 - but worship and acceptance as a response to who he, who that miracle or whatever points towards him being
- Lord of creation, Lord of our lives....
 - what is our response to him now?