

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Making Trouble for Himself Fourth Week of Lent Tuesday, March 17, 2015 8:15 AM
Ez 47:1-9, 12; **Jn 5:1-3, 5-16** (St. Patrick, bishop) (And John presents this as quite deliberate.)

There is this area in Jerusalem and it was filled with water at one time; it is no longer.

And **throughout the world at various times people believed that various pools have healing properties.** After the destruction of Jerusalem, after the turn of the first century into the second, this pool became a pagan temple area. The Jews had been expelled; the Christians hadn't come yet, and it became, as I understand it, a temple of Asclepius, a pagan god dedicated to curing. Lourdes is another place with some sort of little spring. And various places in the world have been actually little holes of water that people believe have curative properties. This is a superstition of sorts; actually they are probably full of a lot of germs.

Now this man thought that when the water stirred that if you get there first, you can be healed, but otherwise no. Again, this is superstitious thinking. **Jesus supersedes all that superstition. He says, "Just take up your mat and walk."** This is the word of God. Now this man did not actually ask to be healed. In a way **Jesus is making trouble for himself.** Just as when he threw out the money changers from the temple, he was making trouble for himself. Here he is making trouble for himself. He is going to a person who didn't even come to him and ask for anything, and saying, "Do you want to be healed?" And this man betrays him. When the Jews, who are of course devoted to the sabbath, see this man carrying a mat, they are of course offended. That's against the Law. And he says, "Well the man who healed me told me to do it," more or less like Adam in the garden saying, "Well, Eve gave it to me." And they said, "Well, who is it?" He doesn't know. He is really clueless. **He is a clueless, faithless person. He didn't come to Jesus with a request.** He didn't have any faith in him. He didn't even know who he was. Jesus just picked him, as it were, out of the crowd to make

an example of him. But of course then got in return betrayal. So when he sees Jesus a second time and he can now identify him, then he goes and reports. He does not do so to proclaim the praise of God. That's not what he is doing. He is snitching. **He is betraying Jesus to the authorities**, saying the man who healed me is Jesus from Nazareth. And then John says, **“Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus.”**

So this is all part of a drama where Jesus, according to John now, this is John's version, and John is different from all the others. **John's version is that Jesus is going out of his way to make trouble**, to offend the authorities, to offend the guardians of the Law, to make them aware of him. In the first case when he threw out the money changers, he was offending the chief priests, the high priest, the aristocrats if you will of the Jewish religion. Here he is offending the Law-keepers, the Pharisees, that is, the rabbis, the teachers. **And John presents this as quite deliberate.**