

Season 4, Episode 10: Glorious Work (5:1-30)

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Sarah: Welcome to two sisters in the cupboard. My name is Sarah and I live in the UK and this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US. Hi, Felicity.

Felicity: Hi, Sarah. Good to see you.

Sarah: You too. You've got a fancy tea for us today?

Felicity: That's exactly what I do have, actually. Fancy tea. Loose leaf, which as soon as you say that, fancy, fancy. It's called asam harmony.

Sarah: Smelly one?

Felicity: No, just a kind of like, actually quite a straightforward black tea, you know, a little more fragrant than Yorkshire tea. But you see that I'm using, like, a tea word there fragrance fragrant compared to El Grey.

Sarah: I mean, more or less than El Grey.

Felicity: Oh, way less than El Grey. Yeah. El Grey, I would call it having a floral bouquet. This doesn't have that, but it's really good. It's my favorite.

Sarah: Exactly. I feel like we need a bit of a chart coming on, almost a spreadsheet in mind of what's maybe not.

Felicity: Spread a tasting kind of diagram. We take that. What about you? Any biscuits?

Sarah: Yes, I've got the biscuit that you had a few weeks ago, the sticky toffee hobnob thing.

Felicity: It's good, isn't it?

Sarah: It's good, yes. I wonder whether it's kind of just it's not the classic hobnob, is it? But it is pretty close, I think.

Felicity: Well, as in, it's a hobnob with extras. Is that what you mean?

Sarah: You know, I've just been going through these packets of biscuits, that slightly weird labours, and I think I'm just maybe craving, like, a standard hobnob and yeah.

Felicity: Go back to the straightforward doing what it says on the tin. Yeah. Before we get into actually getting the Bible open and getting back into John's Gospel, Sarah, we were talking earlier about what it is to hear and believe, and I know that when you came to trust Jesus for yourself, there was an element of hearing and believing in that. Would you just share a little bit of how that came about?

Sarah: Yeah, I think for me, it was an interesting journey in terms of I studied theology at a level and that was around the time that you became a Christian, wasn't it? Uni. I was studying theology and I kind of was taught by an atheist who had all the arguments that racked up against believing this word, even though I was kind of reading a lot of particularly John's Gospel and Mark's Gospel during that time. But I wasn't listening to it, I wasn't soaking it, and there was no hard work going on there. But I was actually talking to a friend earlier today about this, and I think in a similar line to the Samaritan woman, and we talked about the deeper thirst being exposed to her before she could really hear what Jesus is saying. I think that's pretty much what happened to me in terms of that journey to actually come into faith, actually my deeper thirst for him or realizing that what I was clamoring after in this world wasn't satisfying. And those things were exposed along the way before I started really listening and started opening the Bible in my final year at Uni and really starting to hear what it was saying. I think for me, yeah, I really resonate with the journey

that we've taken through John's Gospel and just the power of God's Word when my heart was ready to receive it, if that makes sense.

Felicity: Yeah, really interesting, because in many ways you knew a lot before you I.

Sarah: Knew a lot, and I think I probably was kind of batting away your kind of encouragements to get the Bible with, well, I do that already in theology, but actually I wasn't listening to it in the way that you were at that point. Having you to receive an interesting journey.

Felicity: Of that really helpful to hear the outworking of what we dig into. Let's dig into it a bit more. We're in chapter five of John's Gospel. Sarah, do you want to read that for us?

Sarah: We're going yes, let's go. Chapter five, verses one to Cersei. Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the sheepgator pool, which in Arabic 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 paralyzed. While he was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he'd 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 a Sabbath. And so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath. The north would bid you to carry your mat. But he replied, the man who made me well said to me, pick up your mat and walk. And so they asked him, who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk? The man who was healed had no idea who it was that Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later, Jesus found Him at the temple and said to Him, see you are 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. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Father, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense, Jesus said to them, my Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working. 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. 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. 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. But 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. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but is entrusted all judgment to the sun that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father. He sent him. Very truly, I tell you, whoever hears My word and believes Him He sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life. Very 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 here will live. As the Father has life in Himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the son of man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and 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. By 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.

Felicity: Well, it's a long passage, isn't it? Our last passage was short, and we had a lot to say. And so the likelihood is, listeners, beware this is not going to be a full kind of digging into all of this, is it? We're going to be starting conversations here, and let's start by thinking about the actual, just mind blowing miracle that happens here. So we have this paralyzed man. I feel like we're being convinced that this invalid is utterly helpless.

Sarah: Can you imagine what's happening to your legs in that time in terms of complete powerlessness to do anything, isn't it? I love that. Verse six, Jesus saw him. Jesus misses him. He picked him out and he saw his flight. It's such compassion, isn't it? It's such mercy. Just even that little phrase, he saw him. Yeah.

Felicity: And when the likelihood is that he's felt invisible for most of his life and he sees him, and again we get this explanation, I can't do anything. He cannot do anything independently. He cannot get to the pool, which is supposed to be offering some sort of healing. Everyone's getting there ahead of him. It's all just utterly hopeless. And I love verse eight, Jesus saying, this is just two words, isn't it? As ever, just with a word. Get up. Yeah. Pick up your mat and walk. For us walking people, that's not such a big deal, is it? But for this guy, just life changing.

Sarah: Yeah. And anyone knows that, don't they? Anyone with any kind of disability knows that this was life from disability that he's got. And yet at once the man was cured. It's not just after a while he rehabilitated. It's not just in a few months. He gradually was able to walk again at once. He picked up his mat and walked. I mean, mind blowing, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: Just quite extraordinary. And yet the Jewish leaders who we've just been hearing in the last few passages are not listening, are not seeing what Jesus is doing. Totally missed the point because he says, I've just been healed. And they're like, what are you doing carrying a mat?

Felicity: I know, and that's the thing, isn't it? And the rest of this passage just gets a little bit there's a repeated word. We see that in the next paragraph. So verse nine and ten there, the day on which this took place, was a Sabbath, and it is the Sabbath. The law forbids you to carry your mat. And that is what these Jewish leaders are concerned about. As you say. They seem to be blind to the life giving miracle that's just been performed. And they're concerned about the law, which suggests that this cannot be happening.

Sarah: Well, it's two problems though, isn't it? So concerned about Sabbath, but then they start to think about killing him because he's claiming to be God Himself, or equal with God. So you're breaking the Sabbath law. But not only that, as Jesus defends himself, they then see his extraordinary claims that he's claiming to be equal with a father, and that gives them their impetus, isn't it? But also then Jesus then launches him to this speech, doesn't he, about how he is equal with the Father, that he can't do anything without the Father, and the Father can't do anything without him. And it ends in this extraordinary picture of honoring the Son. Anyone who honors the Father will honor their Son. And we touched on honor last week, didn't we, with the welcoming and his own people not showing Him the welcome, the honor that he deserved. And we're just starting to see that come out here, aren't we?

Felicity: I know. I think that's right. And it's right in a way you can see how that opposition comes about because the only reason that the Sabbath would not apply to Jesus is if he is God. And his defense is all about who he is and how he is, as you say, of God. He has got all authority over life and death as that identity is made more and more clear. So this kind of picture of the Sabbath is kind of getting exploded, isn't it, as they have Jesus right there in front of them. And the question is, are they going to honor Him? Are they going to welcome Him? Are they going to listen to Him? It's sad, isn't it, really? Because they're definitely not. And we're going to see that all the more in the next passage. But here what he says in verse 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, that is it.

Sarah: It's extraordinary, this, isn't it? And again, he frames it very truly, I tell you, at both beginning and ended up, this is it, this is the big deal and this is how simple it is to hear his word and believe Him results in the eternal Sabbath, doesn't it? Essentially, that's what he's driving it. The Sabbath is in him, and it's life in him. And I love that it's so present, past tense when you believe Him, he sent me, has eternal life and has crossed over from death to life. This isn't like in the future you might or in the future you will. No, it happened. It has like is it past or is it present?

Felicity: Well, there's a present tense like you believe now, but the past tense, the certainty is like it is given to you. Okay, yeah, both good grammatical analysis there, Sarah.

Sarah: Thanks.

Felicity: And I think that is exactly it, that this is the eternal Sabbath that Jesus is describing through Himself. And that's what makes the kind of Sabbath based opposition all the more sad and fruitless, because they're pursuing something which Jesus Himself has brought the ultimate end to, like the ultimate picture of resting in Him. And they, as they

don't accept Him, are actually running in the opposite direction towards judgment, aren't they? And death. And I imagine they're saying to all the, you know, their people, you got to keep the south, you got to keep these laws, you got to do this on the other, because that is the way we're going to have life. That's what God says is going to reward these things. And then they've got life through Jesus right there in front of them, and it's just not happening. And that's challenging to us, isn't it? I think, because they are at least it starts off through obedience.

Sarah: Yes, there is a heart there of them wanting to obey, isn't there? But actually, in their obedience, they're obscuring the view of the very things, the very heart of the objects of their beings, aren't they?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: And as he just says that, if you're failing to listen to the Son, that means you're not honoring the Father. So however much you want to honor God by obeying, if you're missing the Son, you're missing the Father as well. You're way off the mark here. You're not even way off the mark. You're right in either direction, aren't you?

Felicity: Yeah. Like which is really challenging, isn't it? Because the idea that the thing that you're doing, like the obedient acts that seem to be of God religion in whatever that looks like for us and for them, whatever, that in itself can be the thing that obscures Jesus, because it's so surprisingly simple, isn't it, to hear and believe Jesus? And they're basically saying, it can't be that simple. Like, it isn't that simple. There's more to this than just this man standing before us.

Sarah: And I think I wonder whether that's one of the challenges on our heart, is actually, like, what things do we put in the way of people hearing and believing in this simple way? Is it the culture of our churches just periphery things that actually just get in the way of people hearing? Because I don't know if you know what I mean in that. I'm not explaining that very well.

Felicity: No, I think that's right. That we can elevate things to the extent that they get in the way of running after Jesus. And I think then that also just raises a question for us as to are we resting in Jesus? He is the eternal Sabbath. He is it. We don't need to do anything else other than hear and believe Him and His Word. And in my heart, I know that I love to have a todo list and I love to just strive a bit more, be extra dewey, that famous word. Dewey I think there's a challenge as well. And the Pharisees, they see this parasite being healed and they're like, no, that's not anything. That's not what God would do, or this can't be of God.

Sarah: But it is in terms of, like, quickly going back to the Old Testament, we get that Isaiah image, don't we, of the blind, the lame, the paralyzed being healed and what's going to come through the Lord's anointed King and you're like, this is it. This is happening. As Jesus kind of interacts with the thin, darkened world before Him. He's, this is it. And I think, yeah, we need to have that same heart that says yes as a paralegal does, don't we? Like, we need to yes. I don't know what I'm saying now.

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right. Seeing our hopelessness, seeing that we are more like the paralympic then we look. And as we see that, as we acknowledge that, we love to see Jesus who's holding out eternal, grace filled, life giving rest. And that's huge, isn't it? And as you say, it is a question of the heart in that. So Sarah, why don't you pray for our hearts that we would respond to Jesus?

Sarah: Yes, I'd love to. Ah. Heavenly Father, we just thank you so much that at the heart of the gospel, it is so incredibly simple that whoever hears your word and believes you and believes Jesus and what he says about you has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life. Praise you for this extraordinary, extraordinary, life giving gospel that we have that goes from death to life, not life to death. We prayed you for that, Lord, and we pray, please, would you cement this wonderful truth in our hearts today? Wherever we're listening, we pray. Would you help us to rejoice in this simple and yet beautiful gospel? Would you help us to make much of Jesus as we dwell on these truths? We pray. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. Thanks, Sarah. Thanks everyone. This I would really recommend spending a bit more time than we spend do.

Sarah: You spend more time? There's definitely a couple of things that we've not touched on and we're sorry about that.

Felicity: But we'll have show no questions as ever, things to say about.

Sarah: Yeah, there's more to follow up on. We got to go. Time's run out. See you next time.

Felicity: See you next time. Bye bye bye. Thanks for listening to this episode. It's sponsored by Tenofbos.com. Check them out for great discounted resources that point you.