

Hope in John 5:1-18: A Samoan Reading

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Faau'i B.j. Faau'i

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dearest Mother, Maria Pepe Faau'i Gogo, whose dream keeps me going in times when I am down, malo Tapuai faafetai Tatalo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness” (Psalms 115:1) Glory be to God now and forever more.

I wish to open by giving thanks to my mentors and supervisors, Rev Dr Vaitusi Nofoaiga and Rev Visessio Saga, for their full support, supervision and sharing which empowered me to complete this paper, *faafetai tele lava and God Bless.*

ABSTRACT

This study is a biblical study exploring what hope is. The hope that vies for ways (in good manners and values accepted by a community of people) that will help one survives in this world. It is seeking hope from a perspective of a disadvantaged or marginalized in society such as the poor and the sick. The study presents a biblical interpretation on how a sick man (hoping to be healed) is healed in John 5:1-18. The interpretation utilizes my experience and understanding of seeking hope in my Samoan social, cultural, and religious world as a hermeneutic to guide the exploration of the text. The exploration is carried out by using the method of literary criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

This study looks at exploring what hope is in relation to my world – Samoan Christian world and how hope can be understood in the reality of that world. This topic is a result of my experiences of hopelessness and trying to deal with them in my Samoan Christian society which evoked many questions. These questions relate to my being a Samoan in my family, my village, my church, and Samoan society. These are different contexts I identify myself with which contribute to my struggle to deal with how to achieve a hope in today's world. This could be an abstract statement but I will elaborate on it in the progress of this thesis. Some of these questions are: What is hope in the world I live in? How can this hope be meaningful to me as someone vying for survival in this world? What are the obstacles and obligations of hope? I have been brought up in the learning of Christian hope, does this understanding of hope help me in my journey as a struggling Christian in this world? It is the task of this thesis to seek some answers to these questions. The Bible is always the arena where answers to how we as Christians should deal with this world are to be found. Therefore, this study will seek in Jesus' healing of a lame in John 5:1-18 some answers to what hope is and how to deal with it.

There are many events in the Bible that reveal people seeking hope in various ways and circumstances. I have chosen this passage because of my interest in this man's healing in relation to the occasion in which he seeks help and the community with which this man is a member – the Jewish religious community in Jerusalem. Studying this topic will be carried out as an exegetical study and will be presented in this thesis in three chapters. Chapter One will begin with a description of the reading approach used in this study which is Reader-response approach. It will be followed by my defining of

hope and the laying out of the method of literary criticism utilized in this work. It will firstly discuss ‘hope’ in terms of defining its meanings, with a brief discussion of its theological description, and my understanding and experience of it in my social and cultural Samoan worlds. This discussion is important because it will highlight an understanding in “hope” which will provide the questions to be used in this study. In turn, these questions will be used as lenses to guide an exploration of hope in the selected text. It is followed by the description of the method used to explore the text which is literary criticism. Chapter Two deals with the exegesis using the methodology explained in Chapter One. Chapter Three is the conclusion where hope as explored in the selected text will be discussed in relation to my world now.

CHAPTER ONE: What is Hope and Method to Explore the Text

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one will describe the Reading approach used in this study which is Reader-Response. This reading approach as used in this thesis is my response as a Samoan reader of the Bible to the healing of the lame in John 5:1-18, in relation to the topic of hope. In doing this, I will use my understanding and experience of hope to raise questions about hope, which will guide my exploration of the selected text using literary criticism. Thus, part two is defining hope and its meanings and significances beginning from the dictionary to theological perspectives. It will also look at my Samoan social and cultural experiences and understanding of hope. This is followed by my explanation of literary criticism as a method and how it is used in this study. A conclusion ends the chapter.

1. Reader Response as the reading approach

For this thesis, I have chosen to use Reader response strategy¹ as my reading approach. This approach begins from the reader. In this paper, I as the reader ask questions about what hope is in my own world – questions that arise from my own understanding and experience of the meaning, practicing, seeking and receiving hope in my Samoan world. This part of Reader response approach is called ‘Reception theory’ by Hans Robert Jauss. The theory is about accentuation of the reader’s part in finding

¹ In undertaking a biblical interpretation a clear description of a reading method is needed such as Literary Criticism, Socio-Rhetorical Criticism, Reader Response Criticism and others. See Stephen D. Moore, “A Modest Manifesto for New Testament Literary Criticism: How to Interface with a Literary Studies Field That Is Postliterary, Posttheoretical, and Postmethodological,” in Stephen D. Moore, *The Bible in Theory: Critical and Postcritical Essays* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

the meaning of the text.² According to Reader-response approach, this part played by the reader is important because there are issues in the story where a response to them is needed. Thus, Reader-response as a reading approach emerged.

Reader response is an encounter between the reader and the text where the reader is considered related to the text. Inside the text there are instructions for the reader to develop interpretation. In other words, it seems as if the text relies on the reader to find what it means; according to Stanley Fish, the story is meaningless without the reader.³ This means that the role of the reader is important because a story is without meaning unless it is read.

Wolfgang Iser another scholar of Reader response utilizes the phrase ‘Implied Reader’ to name the reader now.⁴ According to Iser, we as readers now are far distanced from the time and place of the author, and there is no supplement text to describe the name and attitude of the author. Therefore we are not actual readers that were there at the time of the author. We are Implied Readers, or those whose role is to interpret the text, in light of instructions embedded in the text. This is true when we consider the Bible as a text talking about things which happened two thousand years ago. We are unable to know the author in his/her time in order to know exactly what it means. The work of interpreting the text relies heavily on the reader now or the implied reader. As an example, Iser uses his interpretation of stars; he compares the text as a constellation. According to Iser, when two people look at this constellation, each person will have a different interpretation. One may look at this constellation as a

² See Hans Robert, Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, translated by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

³ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* (Harvard: Harvard University, 1982), 272.

⁴ Iser, Wolfgang, Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1978).

plough, while the other may see it as a bird.⁵ What this means is that, there is one text but different interpretations.

Thus, there is a need of fusion of horizons of the reader and the text, so that the reader is used to answer questions in or from the story.⁶ As such, fusion brings forth the meaning of the text which fills in gaps in the text. For this thesis, I am going to use this approach – Reader response approach – to seek what hope is in the selected text (John 5:1-18). In doing so, I will firstly define and explain what hope is leading to my experience and understanding of hope in my Samoan world. Questions will be raised from this explanation that will be used as guide questions or hermeneutical lenses to explore hope in the text. This task is carried out using literary criticism. The next section describes my understanding of hope followed by how I will use literary criticism in this thesis.

2. Hope, its meaning and significances

2.1. Definition of hope

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines hope in two ways. As a noun, it is a desire that is accompanied by the expectation of or belief of fulfillment. As a verb, it is defined as cherishing a desire with a certain level of anticipation.⁷ Whether hope is defined as a noun or a verb, it describes “a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.”⁸ From this definition, I say that what will happen depends on the person’s desire. It can be either good or bad. In other words, what a person’s

⁵ Wolfgang Iser, “*The Reading Process: a Phenomenological Approach*,” In *New Literary History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, On Interpretation: I (Winter, 1972): 279.

⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

⁷ R. E. Allen, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, ed. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, 8th ed. (Oxford University Press, 1964), 568.

⁸ Allen, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 568-570.

desire is, determines what is expected to happen. Thus, hope can be either true hope or false hope. True hope is hope that expects good results whereas false hope does not bring good results. It is important to realize that sometimes a person's desire that expects good results may end up getting bad results instead. Therefore, hope in reality has obstacles. These obstacles exist because seeking hope is not an undertaking carried out in vacuum. It is a way of life lived by whoever is hoping for whatever he/she wants to happen for him or her in a certain context, on a particular place, in a particular group of people – people with culture, values, and rules. This study therefore seeks to understand what hope is in relation to certain people who have their own culture and values of living life in their own world – people who belong to a particular place. The type of people whose hope is emphasized in this study is the oppressed, colonized, marginalized, unrecognized, lonely, and disadvantaged to survive in a world. It is the hope that desires blessings. It is this understanding that will guide the discussion of what hope is from theological perspectives and my Samoan social and cultural experiences and understanding. In other words, what hope is and how it is to be understood in this world is to be done so in relation to certain people in their own worlds. The theological meaning of hope that will be discussed below is people-centered relative to their relationship to God.

2.2. Theological meaning and significances of hope

The general understanding of what hope is in Christianity is relative to eschatology. This understanding is twofold; one is called 'consistent eschatology'⁹ where we live life hoping that at the end of this world we become the ones chosen to

⁹ See *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Alan Richardson & John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1983), 184. The phrase 'consistent eschatology' was coined by Albert Schweitzer.

live in paradise. In other words, we find this expectation only at the end of time.

However, the other understanding is that with faith and living life in accordance with God's will, makes us realize now that we will be in that paradise. This is called realized eschatology.¹⁰ It is living life with the confidence that we will end up in paradise. Theologians in their discussion of hope in Christian belief fall in either the first or the second, sometimes both. I will mention some of them below as examples.

A well-known theologian, Jurgen Moltmann, describes hope in the Christian context, as Christian hope that can be enacted by the person who hopes, either for himself or for another; through that enactment change can happen.¹¹ With the publication of his book, *Theology of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann has emphasised that Christian hope is firmly grounded on the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹² It is claiming Jesus' death and resurrection as death and resurrection of us all. Its significance is reassurance of life for the dead – the sinners. It is giving the fallen humankind hope of life. Furthermore, according to Moltmann, what is already known of Christ – the cross and the resurrection, assures us of the wealth of that which is yet to be known, and draws us onward in confident search, and in active mission to bring the world within the same divine promise – the kingdom of God.¹³ This unique event in the history of the world, demonstrates God's faithfulness to his promise, by directing men's minds forward in active expectation of something beyond all past and present

¹⁰ See Richardson & Bowden, *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 185.

¹¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 92. Various labels have been attached to his theology by those who are familiar with Moltmann's writings: theology of hope, theology of eschatology, dialectic theology, theology of the cross, political theology, liberation theology, the theology of Trinity, and so forth.

¹² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 221-23.

¹³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 221.

experience.¹⁴ Therefore in looking to Christ, the life of men is motivated by hope, a desire to obtain God's promise. Moltmann's understanding of Christian hope is also seen in John Macquarrie's discussion of Christian hope which he calls the "Full Christian Hope." According to Macquarrie, Christian hope "is more solid than just the emotional side, more tangible in the belief side. It is concrete, as it is solidified in God through Christ Jesus."¹⁵ This is the true hope for us; through Christ all things are possible. It touches on all the different facets of human existence, both individual and social. It isn't limited or cancelled out by death, but overcomes all obstacles.¹⁶ Macquarrie therefore sums up his explanation of Christian hope as hope that is realized in this world through faith in the historical event of the cross, which presupposes a dutiful obedience to the claims of Christ. This bears a positive outlook towards God and God's promise, particularly in times of trials. This dynamic Christian hope produces its own effects which in turn produces a greater openness to the working of God in the personal life and in the community of faith. Such hope is also described by the apostle Paul himself. In his letter to the Romans, he declares that "hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). This is Christian hope.

3. My understanding and experiences of hope in the Samoan social and cultural world.

The Samoan social and cultural world I refer to here is the world that is run by Samoan cultures, values, beliefs, and practices. For example is living life as a member

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 221.

¹⁵ John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, (Oxford: A.R. Mowbray and Co Ltd, 1978), 2.

¹⁶ Macquarrie, *Christian Hope*, 58.

of a Samoan family and village. My understanding of hope in the Samoan world begins with the Samoan word for hope, its meaning, and undertaking.

The Samoan word for hope as a noun is *faamoemoega*, something you wish to happen. This definition has a future sense. It has another meaning in Samoan which is *faatuuatua*, translated into English as reliable and trustworthy. The first meaning expresses self-hoping whereas the latter meaning speaks of one's relying on another person to help him/her achieve his/her hope. Hope as verb in Samoan is *faatali iai ma momoo* meaning wait and wish. This definition shows seeking of hope as a task that needs patience and continuous hoping. The above definitions of hope in the Samoan world have deeper meanings; waiting, wishing, and relying are just the beginning of hoping. What is expected to happen or to be achieved is more important in this hope process. From my experience of my Samoan world, what one expects with hope is that, it happens in accordance with the accepted way of life in a family and village. In other words, what is to happen will not only bring benefits to the person hoping but also to the people he belongs to. This expectation is called in Samoan *manuia*, which is translated in English as blessings. Thus, the hope for any Samoan as a member of a Samoan family and village is to seek blessings such as having more than enough resources for the family and village to survive. Another example is for members of a family and village to be able to help their own people who are in need or those who are hoping or vying for survival. This shows hope in the Samoan world as a relational phenomenon.

In brief, hope as defined above, from the Oxford Dictionary, is also reflected in my Samoan social and cultural world context. That is, it is a desire to achieve a goal. As described, this is expressed in the Samoan translation of hope which is *faamoemoe* which has a deeper social, cultural, and religious meaning. That is, it is about seeking

and receiving blessings in the world we live in – blessing as *manuia* in Samoan. Thus, hope is not just a dream that can be easily fulfilled. Finding it has obstacles and obligations that are people-related and community-related. In this way, hope is not something that will just be achieved in the end of the world. It is realized and is achievable in life. Therefore hope has characteristics and elements that need identifying in relation to people seeking hope, places where hope is sought, and those who help the hoped.

The above discussion on the definition of hope provides key aspects which are highlighted below. Questions evoked from these highlighted elements will guide the exploration of what ‘hope’ is in John 5:1-18.

- i. Hope is a desire to find something – How is hope as desire told and shown in the text?
- ii. Hope is both realized and consistent – How is hope as ‘realized’ or ‘consistent’ is told and shown in the text?
- iii. Hope is social, cultural and religion related – How is hope as social, cultural, and religion related revealed in the text?

To find answers to these questions, I have decided to engage the Reader-response reading approach, as the approach of interpretation. This will be carried out using literary criticism which I will discuss below.

4. How literary criticism is used in this study

Literary criticism¹⁷ focuses on the text. It considers the text as a mirror, reflecting what happened in the past – in the time of the author. There are various

¹⁷According to John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay: “Broadly speaking, literary criticism encompasses all questions pertaining to the composition of a text, including its authorship, historical setting, purpose for writing, and the overall structure, or form, that gives shape to the meaning.” John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 90.

methods of interpretation under the umbrella of literary criticism however I will only focus on two methods – narrative¹⁸ and rhetorical.¹⁹

Narrative criticism is reading the text as a story. I will explore the setting of the story and the characters and their movements in the story. Important in this examination of the text is exploring the plot of the story. The following questions will guide this reading. What is the setting of the story? How is hope as a subject shown in the use of this setting? Who are the characters? How does their relationships to one another reveal the type of hope in the story? How does the relationship of these characters to the places shown in the text reveal hope as a social, cultural, and religion related phenomenon?

Rhetorical criticism is exploring how the language of the text and its features persuade the reader to its meaning or purpose. It is investigating rhetoric used in the text to present or put through its message to the audience. The following questions will guide the reading. Could this text be looked as a rhetorical unit and narrative unit? Who are its rhetorical characters? How does the language of the text present the progress of the movement of these characters as movement towards seeking the fulfillment of hope? Is there a rhetorical problem in the text? How does the language of the text persuade the reader to the type of hope presented in the text?

Summary

I have described in this chapter the purpose of this study and how it is carried out. It seeks in the text of John 5:1-18 what hope is in relation to the reality of the world

¹⁸ For narrative criticism, see, Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990)

¹⁹ For rhetorical criticism, see, George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, 92-100.

we encounter. In doing this, I have used the Reader response approach as explained. It begins with my definition and explanation of what hope is in relation to my experience. It also looks at an understanding of hope in my world which brings forth questions that will guide this study. Answering these questions from the text will be undertaken using literary criticism – mainly narrative and rhetorical criticism. It is the task of the following chapters to show the interpretation of the text utilizing that method of interpretation.

CHAPTER TWO: Exegesis of John 5:1-18

Introduction

To interpret John 5:1-18, I will be using literary criticism emphasizing rhetorical and narrative criticisms. The interpretation will be guided by my experience and understanding of hope laid out in the beginning of this thesis, as a hermeneutic.²⁰ The first question from my experience which will guide the interpretation is: Can the world embedded in the text be looked at as a world in which someone hoping for survival is shown? According to my understanding and experience of seeking hope in my Samoan social and cultural world, I find that seeking hope is family and community related. In such a way, one's hope is not an isolated or an individual matter. A family or community whom a hope seeker belongs to plays a very important part in fulfilling that hope. The implication of this understanding is that, according to *faaSamoa*, fulfilling one's hope in this world is sought in accordance with one's family or community needs. Thus, seeking fulfillment of one's hope must take into account his/her family and community values and needs. The following questions from that experience will help identify whether the world embedded in the text is a world in which someone's hope is sought: How is hope as 'desire' told and shown in the text? Who is seeking hope? What is the hope sought? Does this person belong to a family? Does this person belong to a village or a church? If the person does, how would that person seek hope? How is the

²⁰ My use of hermeneutic here is 'as a perspective or as an eye to see or approach the text.' For example, I am utilizing questions evoked from my experience and understanding of 'hope' to guide my exploration of 'hope' in the text. For more understanding on hermeneutics, see David Jasper, *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 7-23.

person's search for the fulfillment of that hope influenced by belonging to a church or village shown in the text?

1. John 5:1-18 as a rhetorical and narrative unit²¹ and its placement in John's Gospel

The Gospel of John is predominantly considered as a presentation of Jesus' ministry shown in four parts.²² The first is the Prologue (1:1-18) followed by the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50). The third part of this outline is the Book of Glory (chapters 13:1-21:30) followed by the Epilogue (21:1-25). The selected passage, 5:1-18, as a rhetorical and narrative unit, studied in this thesis is obviously placed in the second part of the Gospel of John. It is the healing of a sick man at the pool of Bethzatha and is regarded as the third sign. The third sign comes after Jesus' healing of the official's son which ends chapter four. The third sign itself is told and shown in verses 1 to 9a. But, this study asserts the argument presented by Lozada and Haenchen,²³ which considers verses 9b to 18 as part of the third sign.²⁴ According to these scholars, the healing of the sick man is not only for the sake of the healing itself. It also anticipates the Sabbath conflict between the Jews and Jesus which resulted in the Jews' willingness to persecute Jesus.

²¹ A rhetorical unit has "a beginning, a middle, and an end" according to George Kennedy. See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33-34. The rhetorical unit 5:1-18 is attributed to Jesus. John as the narrator in the beginning of the unit reveals Jesus as the main character.

²² C. H. Dodd and R. E. Brown, scholars of John's Gospel, pioneered this structure. See C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 289; R. E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), cxxxviii-ix.

²³ E. Lozada, *A Literary Reading of John 5: Text as Construction*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000; E. Haenchen, *John 1: A commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*. Translated by R.W Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

²⁴ See also Gerard S. Sloyan, *John*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 78-80; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 209.

This conflict reflects my understanding and experience of seeking hope for survival in my Samoan world. In this understanding, I mentioned that one's seeking of answers to his/her hope of survival is to be carried out in accordance with the values, expectations, and rules of a community he/she belongs to. It is why seeking fulfillment for one's hope is not an easy task. Thus, the achievement and fulfillment of hope sought as shown in the third sign is looked upon as not an easy task.

From the above questions, I consider John 5:1-18 as a world in which a hope is sought by a person in need. It is apparent that the people in need in this part of Jesus' ministry is a group of people²⁵ – considered the sick – gathered at the pool called Bethzatha to await the arrival of an angel who could save them. How the sick is saved by the angel is the information that should be shown in verse 4, the information that is missing from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation. The NRSV moves from verse 3 to verse 5 without verse 4.²⁶ According to scholars it is a lapse in copying the manuscript through time. Therefore, the missed information is not to be questioned because traditions affirm that there was a belief about an angel coming from heaven to stir the pool close to the temple. According to this belief, the first sick person to touch the stirred water is healed. Considering this belief significant, I see the sick gathering near the pool of Bethzatha as an act of seeking answers to their hope for cure and survival. Thus, John 5:1-18 could be looked at as showing a world in which a person in need seeks hope of survival. This is revealed in the opening and closing signs

²⁵ According to Malina and Rohrbaugh: "Sick people lying beside the pool would have been there, not only to seek healing, but also to beg. Such beggars were among the socially expendables, the unclean "throwaway" people who frequented every preindustrial city." Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 111.

²⁶ See Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 111; Jey J. Kanagaraj and Ian S. Kemp, *The Gospel According to John*, Asia Bible Commentary Series (Singapore: Asia Theological Association, 2002), 180; Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, 214.

of verses 1 to 3 as the opening and verses 15-18 as the closing of 5:1-18 as a rhetorical and narrative unit.

The opening signs²⁷ are revealed in verses 1-3 and are considered as the beginning of the unit. This unit on its own is indicated by the preposition *meta* (Greek translation of after)²⁸ in the beginning of verse 1. This preposition indicates two important features of Jesus' ministry in this part. It indicates time and place of Jesus' next event. It shows that another event has just finished and Jesus is now moving on to the next event which will be told and shown from verses 2 to 18. It also shows the movement of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem for the second time according to John's presentation of Jesus' ministry. Other opening signs shown in verses 1 to 3 as the beginning of 5:1-18 are the main characters of the unit and the place where the event described in this unit is set. Jesus is the main character and the pool called Bethzatha in Jerusalem is the setting. Also mentioned in these verses as the beginning is the type of people gathered at this pool (they are sick people; blind, lame, and paralyzed) – they are people hoping for cure. The time of the event is during a festival of the Jews in Jerusalem.

Jesus as shown in the previous parts of John's presentation of Jesus' ministry is the main character of what is happening in 5:1-18. He is God who came to save the world (John 3:16). Thus, the mention of Jesus in the beginning of Chapter 5, alongside the sick at the pool of Bethzatha, anticipates something important will happen later in this chapter. It is something to do with a relationship between someone hoping to be healed and the one who helps heal that person. How this relationship comes about and

²⁷ Opening and closing signs in an interpretation of a rhetorical unit, are language signs that show opening and closing of a unit. See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33-34.

²⁸ *Meta* is with the accusative pronoun of *tauta* therefore it is translated 'after'. See Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 46.

its impact on a community or certain people in this part of the story will be an interesting result of the examination of the middle part of the unit. It is the relationship between Jesus as the helper and the sick as the hoped.

Verses 15-18 of this unit are looked at as the ending part of the unit. These verses speak of the outcome of the good work Jesus did for the man who needed help at the pool or the man who was hoping to be healed at the pool. Verse 15 shows the healed man telling the Jews who healed him. And this leads to the beginning of the persecuting of Jesus by the Jews. But Jesus replied that he with his father continues to work – the work of salvation. Thus, these verses as the ending of the unit reflect the continuation of Jesus' offering of help for the hoped regardless of threats from other people of the community – the people he belongs to.

Elaboration on the exegesis of 5:1-18 as a rhetorical and narrative unit of seeking hope will be carried out based on its following threefold structure.

- i. Beginning vv. 1-3 Jesus went to the pool of Bethzatha in Jerusalem
- ii. Middle vv. 4-14 Jesus healed the hoped at the pool of Bethzatha
- iii. Ending vv. 15-18 Healing the hoped continues despite challenges

2. Exegesis

2.1 Beginning vv. 1-3

According to the threefold structure of 5:1-18 as a rhetorical and narrative unit, verses 1 to 3 begin the presentation of this third sign – the healing of the sick at the pool of Bethzatha. The words *meta tauta* (*After these things*), that begin verse 1 of chapter five links the third sign to the second sign (healing the official's son). '*These things*' refer to the second sign and all things happen in it. What happened after these things is important to John's showing of the third sign. It is Jesus' going up to Jerusalem and why Jesus went up to Jerusalem is also mentioned in verse 1. Jesus went to attend a

festival of the Jews held there. What this festival was among scholars is a debatable subject. However, this study agrees with Keener's interpretation which is the significance of the festival is not its name but to show the different type of people who are gathered there.²⁹ Some of these people were the poor and the sick. This is a valid interpretation when I look at it from my understanding of hoping to seek help in my Samoan world. Celebrations and special occasions in our communities are usually used by some of the poor and sick in our villages and families as opportunities to find good food and sometimes money. Often, these people are ignored and are told to leave these occasions. Sometimes, some of the reasons why these people are told to leave is not because they are not welcome but because they are seen using these occasions as the only ways to survive without relying on their hands to provide for themselves. However, according to the traditions of the festival of the Jews, one of its practices is giving and offering food to those who are in need regardless of who they are and the situations they are in.

The first three verses of this passage are considered in this exegesis as the beginning of the event told and shown in this unit. They begin with showing Jesus going up to Jerusalem. This is the second time Jesus is shown going up to Jerusalem. The first time is revealed in 2:13. Both times indicate a reason why Jesus went up to Jerusalem. It was to attend a festival of the Jews. The festival of the Passover is mentioned as the festival Jesus went to in 2:13. In 5:1 only the word festival is mentioned but not the name of the festival. John as the implied author has to mention the festival of Passover in Jesus' first appearance in Jerusalem because Passover has a significant link to the temple (2:13-17). In this part, Jesus drives out people who sell things in the temple.

²⁹ C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 635.

Not mentioning the name of the festival that Jesus attended in his going to Jerusalem for the second time in the beginning of 5:1-18 is not important as explained above. The focus for John as the implied author in telling Jesus' ministry in the beginning of Chapter 5 is not festivals. Instead, it is showing how Jesus helps those in need such as the sick who are seeking help in these important celebrations of the Jews.³⁰ These types of people are described in verse 3 as the 'blind, lame, and paralyzed.' What these people do are shown by the word *katekeito* (were lying). This is a middle voice verb. A middle voice verb suggests that the person doing the action initiates the action.³¹ Thus, how and why they were lying there was the sick's own doing. This interpretation implies that the desperation for these people who gathered at the pool of Bethzatha to find help is huge and is reflected in John's use of the word *Now* in verse two. The meaning of the word Bethzatha is 'house of mercy.' Taking this meaning into account in examining how seeking hope is fulfilled in this passage, I say that it exhibits the hope the sick in this story is seeking. They are seeking for mercy especially when they are not able to do it themselves because of their physical disabilities. How this seeking is carried out will be explored in the next part of the unit, the middle part (vv. 5-14).

2.2 Middle vv. 5-14 Jesus healed the hoped at the pool of Bethzatha

The middle part of the unit shifts the attention of the reader from the many sick people in verse 3 to one sick person in verse 5. The word *plhqos*³² meaning many

³⁰ This is reflected in Malina's interpretation which is taken from a social-science perspective taking into account the social, cultural, and religious situations of the marginalized in John's community.

³¹ Duff, *The Elements of New Testament*, 172-173.

³² This word means 'many' and it "becomes a term of measurement first in number and then in size." What this means in relation to the people gathered at the pool of Bethzatha is that they are a very large group of people. See G. Dellling, "Plethos," *TDNT*, 866-867.

people or crowd shows that there are many people gathered at the pool of Bethzatha. According to Bruce, the sick as the disabilities is linked to poverty.³³ Therefore, one of the reasons for the huge number of these kinds of people coming to the pool is to beg. According to Jeremias “[b]egging in Jerusalem was concentrated around the Temple.”³⁴ A rhetorical hiatus is seen in this literary shift, in the sense that it is not mentioned why the focus is now on one person. Theologically, this shift goes against Jesus’ inclusive purpose of his ministry which is to save all. In other words, the hope for all to be healed is weakened by this shift.

However, this is not the purpose of seeking hope and achieving it in this part of Jesus’ ministry. This shift is to be understood in light of the connection of the healing of this one person to the conflict between Jesus and the Jews which is revealed in verses 9b to 18. Thus, the focus is on how an example of hoping to survive in this world is in conflict with the reality of life lived by a group of people in relation to their own world of belonging. It is why considering the healing of the lame man in the context of 5:1-18 is important. Reflected here again is my experience of hoping to achieve good in my Samoan social and cultural community. That is, at times there are certain social, cultural, and religious beliefs and understanding which are different from my own understanding, or conflicting with my ways of seeking success in life – my understanding considered as an influence of outside knowledge and learning. The point is, hoping to find good in one’s own community is not a smooth exercise. It is full of conflicts in which one’s awareness is needed.

The example of a person hoping to survive or to be healed is pictured in the character of the one man Jesus is now focusing on. This man has been hoping for help

³³ Patricia Bruce, “John 5:1-18 The healing at the pool: Some narrative, socio-historical and ethical issues,” *Neotestamentica* (2005): 45.

³⁴ J. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus* (London:SCM, 1969), 117.

for a very long time – 38 years. What is important in the focus on this man is that Jesus knows the person who needs help. It reveals in helping those in need the significance of being able to identify such people in a community – people in need. This sick man is described as *asqeneia* (invalid)³⁵ – a spirit causing illness. It shows that this man is physically and spiritually sick.

Jesus' willingness to help this person who is hoping for cure for his sickness is revealed in the use of the participle verbs *idwn* (having seen) and *gnous* (having known). A participle in Greek is a verbal adjective.³⁶ It not only shows actions but also a description of that action. This suggests how Jesus sees and knows this sick man. Jesus sees and knows this man not only with his eyes and mind, but also with his heart. Jesus as a person who is keen on helping these people in need in the festival of the Jews witnessed how sick this man is. How sick this man is, is also revealed in John's use of the participle to describe this man's sickness. The words *katakeimenon* (lying) suggests that this sick person, is not just lying there; he has been in pain and in all this time he has been sick. Jesus sees and knows this man is in desperate need of help, he then asks the question: "Do you want to be made well?" It is a question to find out whether this man is hoping to be healed. The word 'well' in Greek is *ugihs*³⁷ meaning making the whole person healthy. This word is linked to the word *asqeneia* (spirit causing illness) which suggests two things. Firstly, the hope of the sick man to be healed is physical and spiritual. Secondly, the healing provided by Jesus to help the hoped is also physical and spiritual. Jesus' offering of this help is also described in the use of *genesqai* (to become)

³⁵ A. Oepke, "astheneia," *TDNT*, 83-84.

³⁶ Duff, *The Elements of New Testament*, 154-163.

³⁷ Frederick W. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 359.

as a middle voice verb.³⁸ It shows that Jesus himself initiates helping this sick man. It also reveals the love of God in and through Christ to help the person in need or the person hoping to survive amid pressures from society, such as the expectations to obey the law of the Sabbath.

Interestingly in the progress of the story, is the response of the sick man to Jesus' question. Instead of saying he needs help, he complains about not finding someone to help him reach the pool first. This is an expected response from someone sick who has no hope at all. If he has been sick for 38 years how could the person asking the question about helping him in this moment help him? Reflected in the sick man's answer to Jesus' question is his uncertainty of whether he or any other person at the pool would be healed if the angel comes. This is shown in the subjunctive mood³⁹ of the words *taracqh* (might be stirred) and *balh* (might put) in his answer. What this means is that this sick man is following the advice of others about how he can be helped. In other words, this sick man is in a very hopeless situation. Jesus then heals the sick man by telling him to stand up and take up his mat. The word *egeire* (raise) in Greek means to awaken from the dead. Relating the meaning of this word to Jesus' healing of this man suggests that, Jesus heals this man from the death of his sickness which is not only physical but also spiritual. Thus, the hope of this man to be healed is fulfilled by Jesus.

There has been a debate on the healing of this man especially the question of whether this man has anything to do with his healing. The prominent interpretation is that this man does not know who Jesus is because it is shown in his answer to the

³⁸ Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 77.

³⁹ Subjunctive mood is explained by Duff as the "mood of doubtful assertion". What this means in relation to a person thinking of doing something and is not sure what to do, he or she therefore is described in the subjunctive mood as uncertain. Duff, *The Elements of New Testament*, 189-199.

Jewish leaders in verse 13. However, the middle voice verb in verse 9 which describes this man's healing as an immediate healing suggests another interpretation. As mentioned, the middle voice in Greek shows that the action is subjective or is initiated by the person himself or herself. According to verse 9, the word *egeneto* (became) which shows the man's becoming well is a middle voice verb. It suggests that the man himself plays a part in his healing.⁴⁰ In other words, it suggests that the man does have some understanding of the person named Jesus; although he may not remember who he is when the Jewish leaders asked him about the person who healed him. However, as a person who is willing or hoping to get well, the moment Jesus encounters him, is very important to him. He has at that moment placed trust on the person offering him help. This is revealed in what he says to the Jewish leaders in the ending part of the unit; I will elaborate on this in the interpretation of the ending part.

The man's healing is told in the use of the verb *iaqeis* (having been healed) in verse 13. The word *iaqeis* comes from the root word *iaomai*⁴¹ meaning to restore health. This verb is an aorist participle verb which shows the healing as a healing which has already happened in the past but is continuing to the present. In other words, the healing or the fulfillment of any hope by Jesus does not end. It is a continued-fulfillment. Thus the hope of this man for his health to be restored is now fulfilled.

Jesus finding the sick man in the temple is important in describing the connection of the sick man's seeking fulfillment of his hope for healing to his Jewish community. Why does the sick man go to the temple after his healing by Jesus? He could have gone home or somewhere else because obviously, he is healed as witnessed

⁴⁰ Kanagaraj and Kemp also make this interpretation from their Asian perspective of poor people seeking help on the streets of India. Their interpretation is made valid by my interpretation which is based on the use of the word *egeneto* as a middle voice verb to show the sick man's restoration of health. Kanagaraj and Kemp, *The Gospel of John*, 180.

⁴¹ Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 173.

by the Jewish leaders. However, what the sick man does could be looked upon as showing his willingness to continue fulfilling his need considering the Jewish values and beliefs.

In Jesus' healing of the leper in the Gospel of Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus told the leper to go and take what is needed to the priest.⁴² This is reflected in Jesus' healing of the sick man at the pool of Bethzatha. It is not explicitly mentioned that Jesus told this man to go to the priest but, the movement of the character of Jesus and the character of the sick man from the pool to the temple reflects that interpretation. The sick man is playing his part in his healing; to fulfill his acceptance into the Jewish community, he must do it himself and it is an ongoing task. He takes the responsibility of an outcast according to Jewish religious beliefs, to enter the Jewish community by going to the temple. It is not shown why he goes to the temple; he goes there after his healing. Going to the temple could be looked upon as doing what is needed according to his Jewish community expectation in order to become part of his community. Jesus then says to him that his sins are forgiven and not to sin again. This is a good ending to the sick man's seeking fulfillment for his hope of healing but, it is not the end of the story. The Jewish leaders are keen to find the person that heals this man, because he breaks the law of working on the Sabbath; this is found in the ending part of the unit.

As shown in the middle part of the unit, Jesus encounters a sick man and helps him. The sick man is a member of the Jewish community and his hope is to find a way to help cure his sickness. For this person, the fulfillment of his hope is sought within the social, cultural, and religious boundaries of his Jewish family and community. His

⁴² Nofoaiga made an interpretation of this text from a Samoan perspective that considers important bringing a marginalized back to a community in accordance with a community's rules and values. This is reflected in the healing of this sick man by Jesus even though it is not explicitly mentioned by John as I mentioned above. Vaitusi Lealaiauloto Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel," (PhD Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2014), 144-170.

sickness is considered linked to sin meaning he is not clean. Such people are not allowed in the community; their only space is outside of the community which is why they are found by the pool.⁴³ The pool of Bethzatha is a sheep gate where the sheep are cleaned first before taking them into the temple for sacrifice. It is a pool outside of the temple or a space where there are so-called unclean people. Thus, the sick man seeks help at the place or space where he belongs according to his Jewish beliefs and values. Such a person without options will always say yes to any opportunity offered to heal his sickness. His response shows his trust given to the person offering help. It also shows the kind of person offering help who is Jesus; helping the person in need with his heart as shown in Jesus' emotional character.

2.3 Ending vv. 15-18 Healing the hoped continues despite challenges

The ending part significantly mentions the outcome of someone's seeking fulfillment of his/her hope in a community he/she belongs to. Interestingly in verse 15, the implied author speaks of the sick man going away and telling the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. There is enigma in this part of the unit. It is not clear why the sick man goes to the Jewish leaders and tells them about Jesus. Is the sick man helping the Jewish leaders persecute Jesus? According to Malina's and Rohrbaugh's sociological interpretation, the answer is yes.⁴⁴ For them, the healed sided with the Jewish leaders because he wanted to get back to his Jewish community.

My answer to this question is no and this is evident in the meaning of the Greek word *anhggeilen* (told)⁴⁵ that shows the type of telling the sick man does when he goes

⁴³ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 111.

⁴⁴ Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 112. See also: Kanagaraj and Kemp, *The Gospel of John*, 182.

⁴⁵ Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon*, 23.

to the Jewish leaders. This word means to proclaim in the sense of proclaiming good news. Hence, the sick man goes to the Jewish leaders proclaiming to them the good news of his healing, the good news of Jesus Christ. In this way, the sick man now healed could be looked at as another disciple of Jesus. This man's action shows what a person whose hope is fulfilled should do. He/she needs to share his/her experience to other people of his/her community.

The Jewish leaders look at the healed man's proclamation in a different way. To them, Jesus breaks the law of Sabbath and the law of blaspheming. Therefore, he must be persecuted. However, for the hoped, Jesus says that he will continue working as his father. In other words, Jesus is saying that he will continue helping those in need or those who are seeking fulfillment to their hopes. This ending to the unit, makes this unit an anticipation of what is going to happen to Jesus after his ministry. As verse 18 says, what Jesus does in this part of the story makes the Jewish leaders seek more ways to kill Jesus. It shows that helping those in need, the hoped in a community, is life threatening.

Summary

From the hermeneutic of one's seeking answers for his/her hope in the Samoan social and cultural community, the exegesis presented here reveals these important points. Firstly, any community has people with different types of hopes. These hopes are in accordance with the types of situations the people are in. The people who seem to have difficulties in finding ways to fulfill their hopes are the vulnerable, poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized. As shown in this exegesis, the sick is one type of the hoped people who will accept any opportunity offered to make him/her well.

From the hermeneutic of hope used in this study, John 5:1-18 as a text, was considered a rhetorical and narrative unit which its literary world is a world of people seeking hope in a tough and difficult environment. This person is a sick man who is a

member of the Jewish community. His seeking help for his sickness is made within the boundaries of his community. He did not cross the boundaries that hold him back from going to other places of the community. On the other hand, Jesus as the helper crosses these boundaries to ensure this man's hope is fulfilled. It is not to oppose the values of the Jewish community. But to show Jesus' own interpretation of those values which emphasizes the life of a person in need. That emphasis is love.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION

1. Analysis of Exegesis from My Samoan Understanding of Hope (Seeking Fulfillment)

My understanding of hope and seeking it in the Samoan social and cultural world is relational. What this means is that one's hope to do something in life is not an individual hope; it is family and community related. The expectation of seeking fulfillment of one's hope in this context is to get blessings or *manuia*. This understanding is reflected in the exegesis of the passage shown above. In this chapter, I will analyze that exegesis from my Samoan understanding of hope in two sections. Firstly, I will discuss how the sick man's seeking fulfillment of his hope reveals his hope as a relational phenomenon. Secondly, I will explain Jesus' dealing with this man's hope as a way in which our people within our Samoan community can aid other members who are in need.

1.1. Sick man's fulfillment of his hope as a relational phenomenon

Every Samoan is expected to live life in relation to others in his/her family or village community. In other words, one's hope for something good for him/her is also for his/her family or community. As such, seeking fulfillment of that hope is to be carried out in accordance with the values of the family or community he/she belongs to. This is important because not doing so, makes one's hope, a hopeless matter in one's family and community. Like any family and village, the people who vie for opportunities to fulfill their hopes are the poor and disadvantaged. Their hopes are

hopes for ways to improve their way of living – it is hoping for better ways to survive. More importantly, they must seek answers to their hopes and needs in Samoan ways – with respectful manners and humility.

This is seen in the story of the sick man who has been sick for 38 years as shown in the above interpretation. The exegesis shows that the sick man is a member of the Jewish community. This is shown in his presence at the pool of Bethzatha, a place important to the people of the Jewish community. It is a sheep gate pool where animals are cleaned before they are taken into the temple for sacrifice. This sick man as a Jew is also revealed in his presence in the temple after his healing. This man is not only a sick man but also a poor man. One of the reasons why people go to Jerusalem during festivals is to beg. What is important from this man's fulfillment of his hope is seeking help along the boundaries of his Jewish social, cultural, and religious beliefs and values. Jesus finds him at the pool, a place outside of the community, close to the temple – a place considered as a pool to wash animals. However, the poor and the sick regard this pool as their only place of hope because they are not allowed in their community because of their sickness. The poor sick man is ready to die in this space where he is recognized within his community. How many Samoans who cross the boundaries that draw lines of their relationships to one another in their families and communities because of their greed and disrespect?

The sick man's seeking answers to his hope shows another example for the hoped in our communities. When he is healed, he chooses to go to the temple first before going home. According to the interpretation shown above, by going to the temple the healed man shows that he does what a sick person in Jewish religious beliefs should do in order to declare his sickness clean. It is fulfilling of a hope relative to the values and beliefs of one's family and community. This is no different from living in a Samoan

village. There are rules and values to be lived and carried out by any villager when seeking answers to one's hope within a village. He/she needs to abide by the rules and expectations of a village. Inside every village there are families and churches; they are all part of the village community meaning they should all abide by the values and rules accepted by all the people.

Another important point shown in the healed man's appearance at the temple is giving thanks to God for help in achieving his hope. This is important to any Samoan as a Christian. We believe in giving thanks to God after any achievement. Also important is the length of time the healed man waits. Waiting for answers and help is frustrating. But as shown in the exegesis of how this man gets answers to his hope, one should not give up hoping. God has time for each and every one of us.

1.2. Jesus shows the way to help those in need – the hoped

Helping the people in need is no easy task. The hardest part is when our help is not accepted because they conflict with the values of a community. However, Jesus as shown in this exegesis lays down this formula. Everything we do to help others should be based on love. Jesus shows no hesitation to help the hopeful. He went up to Jerusalem not only to attend the festivals but more importantly to help the poor and the sick. He takes risks, to help these people, and the risk he takes is showing his own understanding of his Jewish beliefs that is inclusive. It is a belief which offers help to anyone regardless of who they are and the situations they are in. What this means is that Jesus as helper is not opposing the community values. He is approaching and implementing these values in accordance with God's will. This should be the way for leaders or anyone in our communities who is willing to offer help. This is of course the core of our *faaSamoa* especially on the side of our family, village, and church leaders.

They should be without favoritism and should help members of our communities achieve their hopes in life, because the fulfillment of these hopes will bring *manuia* to our families, villages, and churches. More importantly, the exegesis highlights the significance of considering the importance of the hopes of the poor and sick in our communities. The hopes of these people are realized hopes meaning hopes to get help now. Theologically, considering these hopes as Christian hope, Macquarrie says, as mentioned in Chapter one of this thesis; [this hope] “is more solid than just the emotional side...” What this means is that we are to encounter the reality of finding answers to our hopes in this world, and they are not easy tasks. In other words, we are to prepare ourselves to face the reality of seeking fulfillment of what we hope would help us, our families, and our communities

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