**DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?**

John 5:1-15

Key Verse: 6

***“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?’”***

In this passage, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews (1). The author does not specify what feast it is and so it is not necessary for us to know. And there, Jesus went to, what is called, Bethesda pool which was near the Sheep Gate (2). Beside the pool, there were a great number of people with disabilities- the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed (3). Some manuscripts add an explanation, **“T*hey waited for the moving of the waters.* *From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance, would be cured of whatever disease they had.”*** So, in believing this, there was a man who had been invalid for 38 years (5) and waited by the pool but had no one to bring him in when the water stirred. When he felt to have lost hope, Jesus walked up to him and healed him. The man then stood on his own feet, picked up his mat, and walked. This is the short summary, and from this passage, I want to share what I have learned.

**First, Jesus’ visiting (1-5)**

During the feast, Jesus had many places to visit but he went to Bethesda pool where there were many people who were helpless. But paying no mind to everyone, his attention was to this invalid man. Why him? Why did Jesus heal him only? What about the other helpless people? This seems unfair but we can never understand it because it was done by God’s mercy. Among so many, this man was specifically chosen to receive healing.

We could think we came to this conference by our own decision, but actually, Jesus prepared this conference and brought us here. Why? We are chosen to receive God’s mercy. We are God’s blessed and chosen people. Do you think the invalid man had ever expected such a thing would happen in his life? He must have hoped, but never expected in reality. Can such a thing happen to us too? We all have big or small personal problems and most likely have prayed and struggled for many years. How long should we pray and struggle? The Scriptures tell us that our prayers and struggles in the LORD are never in vain. Sooner or later, such a thing will happen to all of us. My personal prayer is that such a miracle may happen to each of us at this conference so that we may experience the unforgettable just as this man had experienced.

**Second,** “**Do you want to get well?” (6,7)**

 Jesus knows everyone, he knows everything about you, me and the invalid man. The author John says in John 2:25, ***“He did not need men's testimony about men, for he knew what was in a man.”*** According to this, Jesus knew about this man very well from his birth. He knew why and how long he was sick. And this becomes a great comfort for us that Jesus knows me, my situation, my agony, my sorrow, and my frustration.

Then, why did Jesus ask him, **“Do you want to get well?”** It seems very redundant. Who will reply, **“No, I don’t want to get well?”** Surprisingly, some people do not want to get well when they are addicted or infatuated with something at the expense of their own health. But what was this man’s answer? ***“Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”*** (7) According to his answer, it seems that the water had been stirred multiple times, but he could not make it into the pool first. He was always a loser. He knew that there were too many people with physical conditions that allow them to reach the pool faster than him. Most of all, the numbers never reduced, rather, they increased. Practically the man’s chance to be healed was zero. So then why didn’t he leave the pool? Well, what else could he do, there was no other way of healing, so he held onto this small sliver of hope. Can we see this hope as a tiny faith in God? A faith so tiny that we can hardly see it. Such faith is called mustard seed faith and the fact is, Jesus blessed him after that answer. Jesus accepted his answer as **“Yes, I want to get well!”** He was willing to be healed and so, Jesus blessed him.

God has free will and does everything according to it. Likewise, after creating us, he gave us free will. We do everything according to our will and when we do what we do not want to do, we feel miserable. So thankfully, God respects our will, instead of forcing us, God persuades us. So, if we are not willing to be healed, God does not heal us. Our willingness is very important. We often think, **“Why doesn’t God save all people of all nations by his almighty power?”** It is because most people do not want to be saved. I asked one of my Bible students, **“Do you want to accept Jesus Christ into your life?”** His reply surprised me, **“No, I don’t want to. Why should I? Leave me alone!”** By our will, we have the right to accept or refuse God’s offer. And so, God helps only those who are willing. That’s why Jesus taught his disciples to ask, to seek, and to knock. I heard that among those who abuse substances, only those who agree to go to rehab programs are sent to it because they are willing to receive treatment. So before healing, Jesus asked, ***“Do you want to get well?”***

Do you think Jesus asked him loudly to get attention from everyone? No, I think Jesus asked him very quietly only for him to hear, **“Do you want to get well?”** We have many personal problems, recall one of the worst ones. If Jesus asks you the same question now, what is your answer? I will ask you on behalf of him, so please answer quietly to Jesus. ***“Do you want to get well?”***

**Third, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (8,9a)**

Now Jesus challenges his faith by commanding him, ***“Get up! Pick up your met and walk.”*** Even a healthy person can hardly get up by himself after lying down for such long years. Jesus even did not help him get up, he let him get up by himself. The man needed faith to obey Jesus’ word. The only thing he could hold onto was the word of Jesus. Many people at this moment do not even try to get up, because it sounds like nonsense. How many individuals who cannot walk could obey such a ridiculous command? Surprisingly, the man obeyed and tried to get up. I don't think he could get up in one second. He may have struggled in his mind to obey or not to obey. Next, he attempted to move his legs that must have felt like moving a huge rock. When he felt a little bit of strength in his leg muscles, his faith also strengthened and after a few minutes of struggling, he was able to stand up and balance himself. He then could walk, jump, and eventually run.

 Jesus healed him with his Word, Jesus did not provide stem cell treatment on the man, but only gave the Word. The healing power is in his Word. His Word is the Life and the Spirit. His Word is active, it never returns empty (Isa 55:11). His Word is the remedy, healing any kind of sicknesses. It is because he has authority above the heavens and the earth. The universe runs on the Authority of Jesus’ Word. Those who believe and obey the Word of Jesus experience God’s almighty power. It does not matter how serious our sicknesses or sufferings are, the real matter is, whether we believe the authority of his Words and obey it. One day, Peter and John were going to the temple. There, a crippled man asked them for money. Then Peter said to him, ***“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”*** Then instantly the crippled man began to walk. (Acts 3:1-8) The power of Jesus’ Word worked through Peter. Jesus’ Word is still in effect today. He gives us the same Word given to the invalid man, ***“Get up! Pick up your met and walk.”*** (8) What is our response? To obey or not to obey is up to us.

**Forth, Jesus’ warning (9b-15)**

That day was the Sabbath. Out of joy, the man was shouting, jumping, and running around the pool holding the mat. By setting him free from his infirmity, Jesus gave him the best Sabbath ever in his life. That is the true meaning of Sabbath: to give rest in body, soul, and spirit. However, the Pharisees saw this and accused the overjoyed man of violating the Sabbath law. They lost the meaning of the Sabbath, Sabbath day instead, became **“burden day.”** The accusation was so heavy that the man tossed the blame to Jesus, the healer. He should have been willing to receive all the blame on himself and protect the healer, but his attitude was not right.

Later, Jesus visited him again. He was found in the temple. It’s good that he went to the temple. Jesus said to him, ***“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*** (14) This implies that he became invalid due to his sin. We don't know what his sin was. Seems like he was tempted to do the same sin again, so Jesus warned him to not fall back into the same sin. Being healed is important, but not sinning the same sin is more important. If we become spiritually worse after being healed, then it would be better not to be healed at all. Therefore, after being forgiven, we should leave our life of sin. Jesus says to each of us, ***“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*** (14)

**Fifth, Jesus’ message**

What was Jesus’ message to the people in his time? In John’s gospel, this is the 3rd sign. Through this sign, Jesus testifies about himself. He says in verse 36, ***“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.”*** It was his testimony!!! He testifies that he was sent by God. He also testifies that he does what his Father does (19). This means he is the Christ, the Son of God, in other words, God himself. We cannot do what God does because we are not gods, but Jesus does everything that God does. That means he is God. Jesus’ identify was always questioned among the Jews and helping them to accept Jesus as the Son of the Living God was not easy. No matter what Jesus said about himself, they did not accept it. (30,31) Human testimony by John the Baptist was too weak to convince them. (33-35) And Jesus knew that his work holds a heavier weight in testimony. (36) So, he performed many miracles which became a powerful testimony to the people, and many accepted Him after the healing. But unfortunately, the religious leaders did not accept, despite this.

Who do you say Jesus is? When we see God in Jesus, we can see the true Bethesda. Bethesda means House of mercy. It was said that whoever jumped into the pool while the water was being stirred, was healed from any sickness. How nice it would be if there were such a pool in New York. How many of us would be willing to go there? I guess almost all of us even though the chances are very low due to extremely high competition. At first, I thought such a pool was a myth or a fairy tale. But while I was meditating on it, I am convinced that it’s real. The real Bethesda pool is Jesus Christ, our God, our Creator. Do you agree with me? This true Bethesda is seen only to those who see Jesus as the Creator God. While Jesus was on earth, all kinds of sick people came to Jesus. Jesus healed them all. No one went back home without being healed. They did not see the water stirred, but heard the voice of God from Jesus, ***“Get up, pick up your mat and walk!”***, ***“I am willing. Be clean.”*** (Mt 8:3) ***“Young man, I say to you, get up!”*** (Lk7:14) In verse 24, Jesus says, ***“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*** (24) Jesus came down to give us the Word of God. Instead of stirring up the water, he stirred up people’s hearts with God’s word. Those who heard the voice of Jesus, jumped into Jesus and they all were healed.

In the old Bethesda pool, only one person was healed, but in this upgraded version, everyone can be healed. No competition is needed. We don’t even need to jump in because Jesus jumps into us. The pool can heal sin sick people and even dead people. Wow! Can Jesus heal people from addictions: gambling, drugs, and alcohol? Of course! What about gender dysphoria disorder? What about mental illness? What about demon possession? Jesus created us, and repairing is much easier than creating.

Through the Scriptures, Jesus emphasized on our faith. Faith is like an electric wire. As electricity flows through wires, the power of Jesus works through our faith. Jesus does not demand great faith, but instead, a tiny mustard seed faith. Either our own faith or someone’s faith. A woman jumped into Jesus by faith. Then immediately she was freed from 12 years of suffering. (Mk 5:29). Jesus said, ***“Daughter, your faith has healed you.”*** (Mk 5:34) Jesus could have said, **“I healed you,”** but instead, he said, ***“your faith has healed you.”*** For any healing, faith is required. Then, what about someone who cannot have faith by himself such as a demon possessed man? A father brought his demon possessed son and the boy could not have faith in Jesus. In this case, through the father’s faith, Jesus healed the son. There are many examples that Jesus healed someone through someone else’s faith. That is why our faith for someone is important.

Unfortunately, God’s healing does not come in our time. It could come right away, but not always. To the man, it took 38 years. There are many people who even died without being healed. It seems that God did not answer their prayers and their faith seems in vain. But that is not true. On the day of the LORD, which is our resurrection day, we all shall be completely healed. On that day, we shall shout in joy like the healed man. Therefore, we should wait for Jesus holding onto our mustard seed faith and hope in Jesus. Jesus asks us, **“Do you still want to get well? Do you still have faith in me? Do you still have hope in me?”**

 In this passage, I personally learn that there is always living hope in Jesus. I also learn that if I hold his word to the end, the result shall always be a happy ending. Therefore, my decision today is that I will not despair in any situation but get up every day holding Jesus’ word. This year my key verse is Hebrews 11:6. ***“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*** I thought I had faith, but my faith was rooted in my ability and my common sense. I eventually came to know that the work of faith is to do what is impossible. I always thought about what is possible through common sense. But from this year I am challenging what is impossible. I thought that raising disciples was possible, so I diligently challenged, but eventually it came to be known as impossible. I was tempted to give it up as a result, but this passage encourages me to challenge it again like Peter who cast out his net by Jesus’ word.

In our small ministry, there are three children with autism. Once I had no faith in them. So I excluded them in my discipleship ministry. But from this year, I began to include them. The oldest one presides our testimony sharing meetings. I see that he is getting better in social interactions. The 2nd one just graduated from the college. And the 3rd one who is 11 years old, I teach him biblical Hebrew language, hoping for him to be a faithful Bible teacher for his generation. My daughter has scoliosis, which is an abnormal curvature of the spine, even though we have prayed for 12 years, she has not been healed. So, I decided to pray until she is completely healed. Every morning, before I go to work, I pray with her, holding, ***“By his wounds, we are healed.”***

I also started a Bible project at my church to study the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. So far, we have studied up to the book of Isaiah, and my prayer through this is to raise Bible teachers who can teach the whole Bible. Several students joined at the start of this project, but they gave up one by one. So sometimes, I feel like all my labor in the Lord is in vain. But regardless of the number and outcomes, I will continue to do it till my last breath, holding the great commission, ***“Go and make disciples all nations… teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”*** (Mt 28:18-20) I believe that all my labor in the LORD and all my prayers shall be answered one by one sooner or later because my hope in the LORD is living and the word of the LORD is active. Amen!

One word: Let’s get up daily holding his word!