

Hayward United Methodist Church

Pastor Samuel's Message for Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost, August 8, 2021

"Do You Want to Be Made Well?"

Text: John 5:1-9

Gospel Reading: John 5:1-9 (NRSV)

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-Zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids – blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk."

Prayer for Illumination (UMH 6)

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

How would you respond to the question Jesus asked a man who was paralyzed for thirty-eight years, "Do you want to be made well?" During the time of Jesus, many were waiting for healing. Jesus healed many who were sick. Jesus had compassion for them. Jesus healed individuals and he also did mass healing. Each healing story is different. Jesus healed those who lost hope. Probably they tried several means. It worked to some extent. But it didn't bring wholistic healing. Jesus offered healing of body, mind, spirit, and relationship. When Jesus healed a person physically, he restored total healing in every aspect of life. He reconciled people to God. He broke down all barriers that separated people from God. Jesus used physical healing as an opportunity to relate to God's Kingdom. In God's Kingdom everyone is made well.

Next few weeks I will be preaching from John's Gospel. John gives us a deeper understanding of Jesus's ministry. I encourage you to read the text every week and meditate on what God is calling you to do. John wants us to discover the spiritual truths about Jesus and how we can discern God's works today in the life of the Holy Spirit. We will discover new understanding and new way of doing ministry and new way of looking at life itself as we walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will guide us to under the truth which is Jesus Christ.

John's Gospel put Jesus again in Jerusalem. He was there for a festival of the Jews. It could be the festival of Tabernacles. It was an Agriculture festival meant to celebrate the harvest (cf. Exod 34:22). Jesus was there in Jerusalem to celebrate God's blessings of harvest. But he took time to visit the pool by the sheep gate where people with various diseases wait for the troubling of the waters, because healings take place in the pool.

John adds a note that *"an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease they had."* The pool became a healing place. But there was a catch. Only the one who got into the pool first was healed after it was stirred by an angel of the Lord. The power lasted only a few seconds. One had to be really lucky to get into the water. If there was a second one who got into the water, that person was not healed. It had to be the first person. Once they missed the chance, they had to wait for sometime, probably another year.

First, Jesus walked among the crowd of people who waited for the troubling of the waters. Jesus knew about this miraculous healing. Instead of celebrating the festival with his family and friends, they took time to be with the people who were in need of healing. He saw many people in the porticoes with many diseases. He had compassion for them. Otherwise he wouldn't come there.

Jesus gave up the celebration of festival and he chose to be with the people. He chose to be with people who were afflicted with various diseases. He was more like a doctor or a nurse who came to care for their patients even during holidays. Jesus knew where his presence was most needed. He came like one of the sick people to the porticoes. Those on the porticoes probably thought that he too was sick looking for healing.

Jesus comes looking for us. He knows what we need. We may not be looking for Jesus. But he is looking for us. He comes to us unexpectedly. He comes to the place where we least expect him to be there. These are the words Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10). The very purpose of Jesus’s coming into the world is to save and heal. He keeps coming to us to offer salvation and healing.

If you think that nobody cares for me, there is Jesus who comes looking for you. You might think that no one knows your situation. You might think that you have been in this situation for longtime and you might begin to lose hope. At an unexpected time and at an unexpected place, Jesus comes to your life and offers you healing and blessings. Time has come for you to experience divine healing. Time has come for you to experience the fulness of life. Jesus is there with you where you are in life.

Second, Jesus releases his power and heals the man completely. Jesus saw this man who had been ill for almost thirty-eight years. It was a long time to be sick for anyone. He was helpless. He couldn’t do things that he wanted to do in life. He had to depend upon others. Probably everyday someone carried him to the pool. But nothing happened. Day after day he was brought to the pool. For thirty-eight years he was looking for healing. He wanted to get into the pool first. Because of his condition, he couldn’t make it.

Jesus came by. He didn’t know that Jesus could heal him right away. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be made well?” At least someone was interested in this man. No one ever asked that question. This was the first time he saw and heard someone asked the question. He didn’t answer the question directly. He was still hoping to get into the pool when the angel of the Lord came down to stir the waters. He replied, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me” (Jn 5:7). He continued to express his desperate condition. He still wanted some help. Probably he thought that Jesus would help him get into the pool when the water was stirred up. He didn’t know that the Son of God was standing right in front of his eyes who had the power to heal him withing stepping into the water.

Jesus could wait anymore. He unleashed his power. He said, “Stand up. Take your mat and walk” (Jn 5:8). He gave three commands. First, he commanded him to stand. After thirty eight years, this was the first time he was able to stand. Then Jesus commanded him to take up his mat and walk. He had to carry his mat as a reminder that he was in a terrible situation. Now he had to walk home. He had to go and show himself to his relatives and friends what Jesus had done for him. As Jesus was giving the command, the man was made well. The man didn’t not have to wait for another thirty eight years to receive healing. There was no need for him to wait for the angel to come and stir the water. Jesus is the more than the angel. He is the Son of God. Jesus’s words alone effected healing.

Jesus probably also healed other people at the pool of Bethesda. John’s Gospel chose to focus on this man. Like this man others were also waiting for healing for a long time. Are you looking for healing for longtime? Have you lost hope? Have you given up hope? In whatever situation you are in, Jesus comes to you and shows compassion and gives you strengthen to stand up and walk. The author of Hebrews says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who is every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:15-16). What a promise we have! What a Savior we have! We have a great high priest who is ready to come and offer grace and mercy so that we will be able to stand and walk again. God Bless.

Pastor Samuel

**Let’s say the Benediction together:
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with us all. Amen.**