

Title: What Do You Want... Really?

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John 5 (NRSV)

5:1 After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. 3 In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 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?” 7 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.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” 9 At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk’?” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” 18 For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Jn 5:1–18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Main Points

- Jesus asks the man a question that seems to have an obvious answer – of course the man wants to be made well! Right? But the man has been living this life for 38 years. Being made well will change his life from living in the known and unfamiliar to the unknown, and from dependency to responsibility. And in order to embrace Jesus’ healing, he has to take action. He has to work. And he has to break the rules. To get what we really want, we have to say yes to this disruption.
- When we say “yes” to God’s healing, it is a shift from “up until now...” to “from now on...” It can happen in an instant, but its effects will last forever.
- There is a good chance that Jesus’ invitation to us will not only cause a disruption in our lives, but may result in resistance from others who say “We’ve never done that before” or “that is against the rules” or “that goes against who we are.” Are we willing to say yes to Jesus even though it might make other people mad?
- Jesus warns the man not to sin anymore lest he find himself in an ever worse situation.
- There is a warning here about falling back into old patterns once we have left them. If we have been healed and set free, choosing to go back to that life can leave you in even greater bondage.

For Reflection

- Think of time when you felt stuck and unable to affect a change. What feelings come up? Journal about what you would tell Jesus if he asked you about it. What would you say so that he understood just how impossible it felt, how others (mis)treated you, and how you felt God was (or wasn’t) present? Be as honest with Jesus and with yourself as possible.
- Now that you’ve told Jesus your story, take time in silence to listen with your heart for his response. Write that down.
- What would it look like for you to “be made well”? Describe it as clearly and completely as you can.

- Now imagine that God brings this about suddenly. How would you be different? What new freedom would you have? What new responsibility?
- Listen now for an invitation or direction from Jesus. What is he inviting you to do or to be right now? As best as you can understand it, write it down. Even if no invitation comes, thank Jesus for the time you've spent together.

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