

1. Sermon - Sixth Sunday of Easter - Trinity Church - Hobin 5/25/25

Let us pray:

“Holy God, open our eyes to your presence, open our ears to your call, and open our hearts to your Love. Amen.”

Picture this.

There is a certain pool in Jerusalem. In Jesus’ time it lay outside the city walls, and was used to provide water for the Temple. It was well known to everyone, because there were five porticoes—covered porches or walkways—that surrounded it. And in the shade of those covered walkways lay invalids—individuals who were sick or paralyzed or blind or lame. The name of the pool—“Beth-zatha,” is Aramaic. It means “House of Mercy.”

And it was said that the pool held healing powers. Perhaps because of its proximity to the temple and perhaps because of a local legend that stated that an angel would occasionally visit the pool, and whoever was first in the water after the angel had “Stirred it up” would be miraculously healed.

This pool is the setting for John’s gospel today.

Jesus was in Jerusalem for a festival at the Temple. And Jesus, good Jew that he was, could have taken advantage of good worship and celebrations, food and wine; a chance to catch up with old friends and relatives. But, instead, he visited the pool of Beth-zatha, spending time with the sick, marginalized and the outcasts. (Like Mother Susan spoke of last week)

And so begins a fascinating encounter. Jesus sees a man and, realizing that this man has been there a long time, asks, “Do you want to be made well?” It may seem like a strange question – but I do not think it is. The harsh truth is that there are some people in life who genuinely do not want to be well because they gain a sense of identity from their sickness.

So, this is a very insightful question from Jesus: “Do you want to be made well?” In essence, do you want to be healed?

Perhaps predictably, the man comes up with what, when we consider it, seems to be a lame excuse. "I have been here for 38 years. I have no-one to put me in the waters when they are stirred up." It seems a bit like whining and blaming. Given Jesus's insightful question, he may have become institutionalized into his sickness. Instead of asking for help, his whole life now revolved around sitting there by the Pool. Jesus ignores the superstition and says to the man, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' And the man picks up his mat and begins to walk. He continues to walk away, with no word of thanks.

Perhaps this story is not so much about the healing power of God as it is about the attitude we have when we encounter the work of God in our lives.

What is our response when God asks us, 'Do you want to be made well? Do you want to be healed?' Now, that may be about receiving a physical healing, a healing of attitude or emotions or a healing of memories or past hurts.

But it is just as likely a question regarding our spiritual lives. We come to church each week and we say we love God and we say we want to grow spiritually and to develop as spiritual beings. But Jesus asks us to look deep inside and ask ourselves the question: how much do we *really* want to grow?

What are we prepared to do to grow with God? How much energy are we prepared to put into our spiritual disciplines? What are we prepared to give up, to let go?

Who are we prepared to forgive?

Jesus looks at each one of us today and he says, 'Do you want to be healed?' Let us not be too quick to respond or be too shallow in our response. Let us not just say as a knee-jerk reaction, 'Of course I do!' We must attend to ourselves and look deep inside. 'Do you *really* want to be healed?'

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What is holding us back from God's invitation to "Pick up our mat!"?

To say “Yes Lord,” to be a faithful follower of the Gospel of Christ, to pick up our mats is risky business, indeed!

What will become of us if we truly live what we BELIEVE and are called to BE?

Let us pray that we open to the Holy Spirit moving and guiding us on our spiritual journey!

We do this as a community of believers coming together radiating God's love, light, and salvation in the world. Now is the time! Now is our call to shine and to allow God's Light to shine through us! Fear not! Never doubt! Never get small! Never believe you are alone!

Always be grateful and kind!

Let us pick up our mats and faithfully follow our Risen Lord and Savior!

AMEN!

(With thanks to Mother Susan Wrathall, Cathie Beattie, St Andrew's, Enfield CT, and Sermons that Work)