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Do you Want to be Healed?
John 5:1-18

At its heart, the story is about ***changing a life***,
the life of the man beside the pool,
who for 38 years has lain there waiting to find healing.

It is about change. Seeking it, and accepting it.
Because Jesus comes offering it to this man at the pool.

Talking about ***change*** in church is dangerous.
After all, change for anyone and everyone is just hard.
We're creatures of habit.
But our protestant reformed heritage is also about change....
reformed and always reforming is the motto...
we are about change—the kind of change God brings.

Thomas J. Watson Jr., founder and CEO of IBM from 1956 to 1971 wrote:
I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success,
must have a sound set of ***beliefs*** on which it premises all its policies and
actions.

Next, I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success
is faithful ***adherence to those beliefs***.

And, finally, I believe [the organization] must be willing to ***change everything***
about itself except those ***beliefs***. Thomas J. Watson, Jr., *A Business and Its Beliefs* (1963);
Bill White, Paramount, CA

True of us as a church. And each of us in our lives.

And our Savior Jesus is about ***changing lives***.
Most of us come here because we know that and want that on some level—
even if we are a bit slow in accepting it.

I believe Elbert Hubbard's words are true of Christianity, If your religion does
not change you, then you should change your religion.

Elbert Hubbard. *Leadership*, Vol. 15, no. 4.

But it's a tricky deal—we are often trying to be in **control** of the change
 That we want to see in our lives—by changing things around us.
 We see a mess and we want God to change it. (at least I do)
 As one pastor put it,
 "Too often we try to use God to change our circumstances,
 while God is using our circumstances to **change us.**"

Dr. David Osborn, quoted in Compass Magazine, Quiet Waters Ministry (April 2003);

It's kind of like prayer—
 so often prayer is answered not because it changes our world,
 but because it **changes us.**

And being changed is Good News.
 And it's beautifully illustrated in John 5 beside the pool.

Let's suppose that **we are the man** on the mat.
 We all have our own hang-ups and hurts and dysfunctions.
 (I'll let you fill in your blanks, I'll fill in mine.....)
 I'm a little obsessive, worrisome, and neurotic, I don't know about you....

Sometimes for decades we hang onto hurts, **grudges, pain** from years ago,
 even merely perceived hurts and hard feelings.
 It's amazing what we stuff into our hearts
 that hurts us more than anyone else.
 And we wait, 'by the pool' so to speak, wanting to let it go in theory—
 but we watch as someone else gets freedom from their demons and skeletons,
 not us.

Truth be told, we may **not want to be healed** until Jesus comes right up to us,
 and offers a new way of life.
 We can get comfy in our sickness and dysfunction,
 or rely upon our own superstitions, like the healing waters...
 instead of looking to Jesus and simply accepting
 his free grace and a new way of life.

So we carry our hurts. For years.
 No wonder Jesus has to ask, "Do you **WANT** to be healed?"
 Sounds like a stupid question,
 but when you're carrying around a suitcase of hurt,

if you have to buy an extra **airline seat** in life for your emotional baggage, then the question is legitimate. ‘Do you want to be healed?’ is THE question of the day.

And I absolutely LOVE that **Jesus doesn’t wait** for the answer to that all-important question. He hears all the excuses, and jumps right in with the healing and the grace. Get up and walk—enough with **living** like this—you don’t have to. Enough with all the **superstitions and excuses**—you don’t need them. Just be healed. Take up your **mat and walk**.

It sort of fits that the man **doesn’t say thank you**, that he walks off, and even passes the **buck** to Jesus when blamed for breaking the law on the Sabbath by carrying his mat.

We **don’t always say thanks** either. And it isn’t always easy when we change. Sometimes our healing leads to its own **problems**—like when a sick family member finally gets better, and nobody else in the family knows what to do anymore.

It can be hard once we are healed to deal with **people’s reactions**. People get used to us being a certain way and it’s hard if we change. *(In my house my kids say—stop using that special voice mom....have you been learning more therapy???)* It disrupts everyone else. In this story, it disrupted the religious establishment, the way things had always been for the leaders of the day.

The **religious establishment** didn’t know what to do anymore with this ‘healing on the Sabbath’ Jesus man who claimed to be one with God. They were threatened and frustrated by him.

But the Good News remains. Jesus heals the man at the pool—**not the one** who was most deserving and hard working. He didn’t seek out those who were really trying to get better. He actually went to one who was used to his place at the pool,

after almost four decades of lying there!
 And he healed that man!---talk about pure, *unmerited grace*.

We certainly don't act this way.
 We want only to help people who are the *most deserving*, hard-working,
 eager to help themselves kind of people around.

But for a moment, consider those who are not.
 Consider those who you might think of as *less deserving*,
 and then imagine that *person is your child*, your sibling, your loved one.
 And you are just a little iota closer to understanding the *heart of Jesus*
 when it comes to each one of us—
 no matter who we are or what we've done.

We are not just people, we are *all God's children*,
 loved more than anyone by Jesus.
 And we have been extended grace, grace upon grace.

So the question He asked then is the *question* he asks each of us today:
 Do you *WANT* to be healed?
 Do you want to be free of those hurts and hang-ups
 that are holding you down?

Do you want to *let go of the pain* of the past,
 in order to have new life in the future?

Jesus is there to offer us that chance,
 To *get up and walk*.
 To start over again.
 To live completely differently if we only accept the offer.

Sure, it might take a *few tries* for stubborn folks like myself.
 But the offer stands, the question has been asked,
 The words have been spoken, and the love is ours for the taking.

And you know what else?
 We are the body of Christ—believers who *support one another* as we change!
 We are the ones who encourage one another as we change!
 We are the ones who *joke* with one another about how hard it is to change!

In here you can talk about how ***God is still working*** on you...
In here you can be honest about how hard it is to accept God's grace
In here you can let your hair down and be the person who is being made a
new creation in Christ!

Do we want to be healed?
Do we want to let go of any hurts and hang ups, the pains of the past?
Do we want to be made new creations in Christ?

It's not easy, ***we may not feel like saying thank you*** right away,
But it's new life...better life...life lived with and for God in this body of Christ!

I know we're Presbyterian, but that news could stand an 'Amen'!
(it's ok, you can mumble it under your breath 😊)

May we meet him in our worship, in our prayers, in our hearts,
Say yes, and be healed. Amen.

Let us pray.....