

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4-16-2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus asked a lot of questions. We hear them each week as the gospels are read in worship. We listen to the questions that Jesus asked people a long time ago and then get the preacher's interpretation of what that narrative is all about. But rarely do we hear those questions as applying to us. After all, Jesus was asking someone two thousand years ago. It's not like He's asking me. But they are recorded in the scripture that God has handed down to us and I think those questions are much more than just something Jesus asked someone a long time ago. I think they are questions for us.

In John 5:1-15, we hear how Jesus visits the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. Many believed the Pool had healing powers—that whenever the waters bubbled up, the first one in would be healed. Disabled and invalid people would gather here or be brought here and wait for the bubbling water. Then the first one in would be healed.

Now there was a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. Apparently, family or friends brought him here every day and placed him on a mat to wait like everyone else. We aren't told the specifics of his condition, but it was severe enough that for him to enter the Pool would require someone else putting him in. When Jesus hears about the man and his situation, Jesus goes to him and ask a question: "Do you want to get well?" It seems an odd question. Look at the

dedication of that man who every day as there hoping to get his chance. Why would Jesus ask such a question?

First, it is a considerate question. The man had not asked for help. And being a beggar in that day could be quite profitable and easy. Perhaps he did not want to lose his source of income. In the movie "Monty Python's Life of Brian," the main characters are confronted by a man asking, "Alms for a former leper?" When they ask him about this, he explains that he had a perfectly good source of income until this fellow Jesus comes along and heals him. Fictitious, but it makes the point. This man at Bethesda could lose income and perhaps did not want to be healed.

Second, the man had been in this condition for years and perhaps had lost his will to get better. Maybe he had given up hope. Jesus' question confronts him with the reality of his situation to see whether he is resigned to his condition or whether he really does want to get well.

Third, the question confronts the man with the possibility that he kind of liked being this way. Thirty-eight years and no change. Did he prefer the additional attention he received? Was he fond of the daily contact with those who took him to the Pool and around who he spent the day? Did he appreciate his current situation enough that he didn't want things to be different? Why wasn't he getting well?

All these things are behind Jesus' question "Do you want to get well?" both for the man and for us, because you see, the question Jesus asks him He also asks of us. In the Bible, the word translated "healed" can also be translated "saved." Jesus here asks if the man wants to "get well," but the meaning is the same: "Do you want to be healed" or "saved?" We each know our own lives. We know the physical challenges in our lives, but we also know the emotional and spiritual disabilities we carry. A deeper relationship with Jesus that can heal our infirmities may not be what we want. What will the future be like if things change? How might my relationship with others different from that to which I have grown accustomed? What will be my role in the Kingdom of God if I more fully accept and claim the healing Jesus offers? The question is not just for the man back then at the Pool of Bethesda. The question Jesus asks him He also asks us. But when we hear it that it is for us, things change. "Do *you* want to get well?"

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey