

# DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?

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*JOHN 5:1-9*

*LETHBRIDGE MENNONITE CHURCH*

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*MAY 5, 2013/6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER*

Today is a Sunday of celebration.

We have already celebrated with Weston his decision to get baptized and to sign up for the journey of following Jesus.

We have celebrated with Agnes and Alan and their decision to make their belonging with this community of faith more formal.

It has been a good morning.

I'm not going to preach a sermon today. I simply want to offer a few reflections on the text from John's gospel that we just heard as we move toward celebrating the Lord's Supper together.

The scene in John 5 is also one of celebration.

We are in Jerusalem at one of the three important Jewish feasts (Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles).

But amidst all of the hustle and bustle and celebration of a feast in the Holy City of Jerusalem, there are less celebratory scenes.

In a pool beside the sheep gate, we read of the broken down, the marginalized, the hopeless, the suffering... the invalids, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed—all gathering in the hope of finding their way to a pool of water associated with healing.

Jesus sees this scene, these people. He sees one man in particular. We're not told what this man's specific problems are—Is he blind? Paralyzed? Both?—but we know that he is unable to get to the pool in time when the waters are stirred up (some ancient authorities say that there were times when the angel of the Lord would come and stir up the waters and that whoever went into the water after this would be healed).

I want to focus on just one question, the question Jesus asks the man:” “Do you want to be made well?”

It seems like a silly question, doesn't it? Jesus knew that the man had been lying in this place for a long time (v. 6). Why would he even be there if he didn't want to be made well? Who wouldn't want to be made well?

But Jesus asks him anyway. Why?

Perhaps it was a way of acknowledging that all of us need to choose the things that make us well. Perhaps it was a recognition that sometimes our pain and our scars have been with us for so long, that we don't know how to live without them—they became a part of our identity that we are less willing to let go of than we might think! Perhaps it was simply an acknowledgment of this man's freedom to choose. The text doesn't say.

At rock bottom, though, I think that Jesus knows we need to want to be made well whether we are physically blind and paralyzed or our infirmities are of a more spiritual nature.

We need to want to be forgiven.

We need to want to embrace a path that leads to new life, better life.

We need to want to leave behind the destructive habits that we have learned to cling to over many years, the wounds that have accumulated that have become part of who we are, just like the man at the side of the pool.

We need to want to allow Jesus to tell us who we are rather than the many voices inside and outside of our heads in the world around us.

We need to want to hear the truth that we are loved, that we have value, that our lives have value and purpose and a destiny beyond death.

We need to want all of these things and more and we need to want them more than the answers that we have grown accustomed to.

Jesus' question comes to us today, too: “Do you want to be made well?”

Each of us is here today because, in some measure, we have decided that we do want to be made well. Whether we are taking our first halting steps toward wanting to allow Jesus to make us well, or we have been walking with Jesus for a lifetime, all of us know, on some level, that we are poor and needy and that we cannot save ourselves.

This is why we do the things that we have seen today. This is why we get baptized, this is why we cast our lot with this thing called “the church,” this is why we remember, again and again in the Lord’s Supper, the price that was paid for our healing.

And, as Alan said, we are the sick who need a doctor. “Those who are well have no need of a physician.”

Morton Kelsey (quoted in Brennan Manning’s *The Ragamuffin Gospel*): “The church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners.”

A final comment.

Did you notice when the passage was read that the man never actually answers Jesus’ question?

He doesn’t say, “Yes, of course I want to be made well!” He starts talking about how difficult it is for him to do what needs to be done to be healed.

I imagine Jesus smiled at this point. We are very good at answering questions that Jesus is not asking of us, aren’t we? J

Then... Jesus simply speaks the word and he is healed. And in so doing, he demonstrates a profound truth.

Healing has nothing to do with what the lame man does.

This is what we celebrate at this table. Just like the lame man at the side of the pool we don’t contribute anything to our healing.

Like the lame man, we do our best to do it ourselves. We try to figure out the rules, we try to please God, measure up, whatever.

But what this table declares is that what is necessary for us to be made well has already been done for us. The cross and the empty tomb declare that God loves us, that God forgives us, and that God offers us new life.

There is nothing for us to do but to look to our Great Physician and to receive the gift that he offers.

Amen.