

### ***Do you want to be made well?***

Easter 6 – May 23, 2019 – John 5:1-9/C (alternate)

**Summer is right around the corner**, and begins with this Memorial Day weekend. We're all thinking about our travels – vacations, family visits – travel for sporting activities and relaxation – ah summer! But the fact is, we are traveling all the time. Life truly is a journey that we experience. Even though we don't really know where we will go, how long we will stay, or how long, even, the journey will last. We just travel on, day by day.

For a man whose 33-year journey on this earth changed our lives, we really know very little about Jesus' whole life. Those who testified to it through their God-inspired stories shared about 10 % of his lifespan with us. That's just three years. Three years of thirty-three. Three years of ministry. And yet, there is much we can learn from knowing him.

**John's Gospel does not begin in Bethlehem**, but in the cosmos. The 1<sup>st</sup> stop is at the water's edge east of Jerusalem. Jesus first footprints are at the Jordan, where he first appears, as he comes to be baptized by John. His 2<sup>nd</sup> stop is all the way up north in Capernaum and Cana, where he calls his first four disciples: Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel! 3<sup>rd</sup> stop: south again to Jerusalem for Passover – where he encounters the Pharisee, Nicodemus at night. Then on to 4<sup>th</sup> stop: Samaria, on the way back up north to home in the Galilee, and on the way he encounters the Woman at the Well. Finally, today's stop: Once again to Jerusalem for another festival, this time passing the Pools of Bethesda outside Jerusalem.

**So what can we learn from these initial journeys of Jesus?** Well, we are claimed, called and sent thru baptismal water into (our) world. We, too gather companions for the journey along the way. Sometimes, people will be drawn to us, seeking something greater and suspecting we might guide them.

Some will go away from that encounter – like Nicodemus –  
but the seeds will still be planted for future blooming.  
Some will bring forth fruit immediately – as did the woman at well -  
and many who hear our stories will start telling theirs.  
But some will test our patience, our values – like the man  
at the pools of Bethesda, literally the “house of mercy, kindness.”

**The pool was called an “asclepeion,”** after Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. Legend said that spirits or angels would periodically disturb the waters, and if you were the first one in the water, you would be healed. On his way to Temple, Jesus saw a man who had suffered for 38 years -almost the average lifespan – and just short of 40 (a Biblical number of completion, and the amount of time the Israelites spent wandering the their own wilderness.)

*“Do you want to be made well?”* Jesus inquires. Perhaps he wonders why the man has wasted so much time seeking health from sources that cannot provide it. We can imagine this man thinking, *“Well, of course, yes I do!” (For that is what we think we would say...) But instead...he makes excuses for why he is still afflicted! He can't get to the water, and if he were to get there, someone would jump in front of him! Seems his mind and heart have been consumed with his own suffering; what folks haven't done for him; why he hasn't been healed. It's been that way all his life; he has decided not be healed, so he cannot hope to be open to the new life/wholeness Jesus brings.*

I can imagine him just like people that all of us know: Those who have pushed everyone else away. Refusing help. Going it all alone. So that family and friends stop offering assistance.

Now they are truly alone. No more friends. No visible family. No resources. Alone. Poor. Sick. In exactly the place where Jesus always goes. And **Jesus makes him well.** Not by healing his legs or opening his eyes, no. Jesus ***asks him to trust.*** To stand up, pick up his stuff, and walk away.

And the Spirit moved in this man and disturbed his life, just as surely as if the waters had rippled with healing. Just as surely as Rory, Burke and you are called out of the waters of Baptism into a life centered on God and neighbor.

A man waited his whole life by a pool of water, knowing if someone would just put him into it, he would be saved. But for his whole life, no one did. Until one day, Jesus walked in...and he didn't put him in the water or ask him to decide. He simply told him to stand up and walk.

You have a friend, or co-worker, or relative or acquaintance, whose life is turned upside down; who needs a little help to feel loved for just exactly who they are, exactly as they are, so they can go on for one more day. But for most of them, no one has ever told them that, until **you** walk in and speak the gospel truth: *"You are Beloved by God! COME OUT OF YOURSELF! Tuck that mat under your arm and carry it with you."* Then, when people ask you, *'why are you carrying that old mat?'* all you need do is **tell them.** Tell them the story of Jesus and you. Tell them the story of how to be made well. Amen.

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