

## DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 67**

<sup>1</sup>May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah* <sup>2</sup>that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. <sup>3</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

<sup>4</sup>Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah* <sup>5</sup>Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

<sup>6</sup>The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. <sup>7</sup>May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

### **John 5:1-9**

<sup>1</sup>After this (which refers to the healing of a son of a royal official), there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup>Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. <sup>5</sup>One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” <sup>7</sup>The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.”

<sup>9</sup>At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL?

Do you want to be well? The exact way the question is recorded in the Bible is: “Do you want to be made well?” That adds a little different nuance to the question doesn’t it?

The “made” well adds a layer of mystery. So, what is going to make the man well? Does he need motivation? Is he a hypochondriac?

Did the use of the phrase “to be made well” mean he was about to receive a different type of healing? We don’t know. We weren’t there to witness this.

But think about it today. “Who here wants to be well?”

Of course, we all raise our hands for that question. But maybe we have something in common with this man who waits and waits for the water to stir before he acts to be made well.

## HEALTH GUIDELINES

Raise your hand if you ate five servings of fruits and veggies yesterday. Raise your hand if you got more than seven hours of sleep but less than nine hours last night. How about eating fish? Anyone eat fish at least once last week? Raise your hand if you prayed every day for at least fifteen minutes. Raise your hand if you did not drive and text at the same time last week. Good!

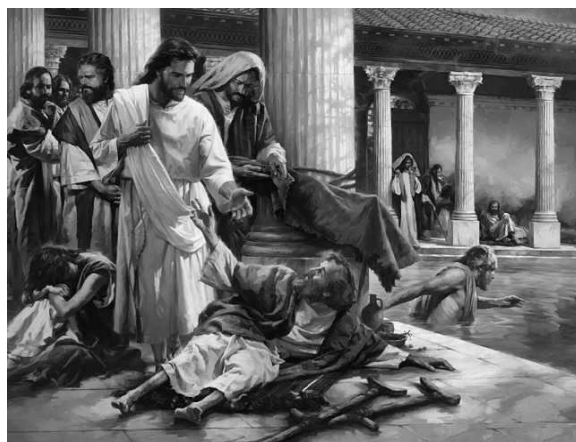
All these things help you be well and safe.

When we don’t do these things, when we neglect to follow these health guidelines, we may not consciously think about how our behaviors are setting us up to be sick. Drinking alcohol, not eating enough fruits and veggies and fish, not praying, and not getting enough sleep are all factors that eventually lead to illness. Subconsciously we might be denying we are contributing to developing an illness now or in the future, but we must face up to reality eventually.

## THE HEALING POOL

This man in our scripture reading today is living in what might be considered today an outdoor outpatient clinic.

There were five porticos by this pool of water and the chronically ill and disabled waited and waited along its edges. There was a legend that when the water stirred in the pool, it wasn’t due to a normal breeze crossing over it; the moving of the water was attributed to an angel that would visit the pool at random times and that visit gave the water healing ability.



The first person to step in the pool after the water was stirred by an angel received healing. So that was what this man was explaining to Jesus when Jesus asked him if he wanted to be made well. He answered him by giving the reason he was not yet healed.

He was always pushed aside and someone else would get the healing before he could make it into the pool. (I don’t mean to sound cold) But Jesus might have sounded a bit cold, here. He might have more personally said to the man, “Hello, I’m Jesus, how can I help you?” Instead he walks up to the man and asks him: “Do you want to be made well?” As if the man might want something else?

## **ANOTHER WAY**

Jesus wanted to make him aware of how he could be made well through another way. He didn't have to wait to be touched by an angel.

What is it about this man that Jesus focused on rather than other sick people around the pool? Jesus had come upon a sickness hotspot. And for thirty-eight years this man knew nothing else. He learned helplessness at the pool, and he believed there was no other life for him but the life of an invalid lamenting alongside a healing pool where he never got a break. No one was helping him get his life back together. Where was his wife? Kids? Friends? He felt all alone, spiritually and physically paralyzed.

### **NOT A "BLAME THE VICTIM" STORY**

This isn't a blame the victim story even though that was often the cultural perspective on illness and calamity in those days. Victims of illness and life chaos were blamed for bringing evil upon themselves by sinning or defying God in some way.

But Jesus is always consistent with dispensing forgiveness, compassion and mercy. Jesus looks into this man's eyes and sees psychological paralysis. For some reason this man can't move and has no hope. I don't believe he was blaming this man as much as helping him figure out his own motives and beliefs about himself. Another way to ask this question might have been: "Do you want to change your life by faith in me rather than faith in this magical water?"

Jesus asks, "Do you want to be made well?" The man doesn't realize the depth of the question. He is asking a heart question about what this man truly desires for his life. He seems to tune in to the man's need for spiritual psychological help more than physical help.

## **DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?**

**Has Jesus ever asked this question of you?  
Do you want to be made well from things that paralyze you in this world?  
Do you want to be free from the fear of death or burdens and social expectations that break you down?  
Do you want to change your hopelessness to hopefulness?  
Jesus wants you to participate in your healing through faith in him and make you feel confident in your worthiness to be healed.  
Jesus wants you to deeply believe that God loves you more than you can hope for or imagine.**

### **HEALING ON THE SABBATH**

The way Jesus conducted this healing was earth shattering to those around him. Although he wanted the man to participate and choose to be well, Jesus was doing this psychological/spiritual healing on the Sabbath when no work of any kind is supposed to be done. Not even psychological healing work was allowed. This part of Christ's healing ministry gave him another opportunity to publicly defy the Jewish laws that valued rules over people.

But before the healing could happen, it was important for Jesus to know this man wanted to be made well. He didn't want to heal him against his will if he was comfortable in the dysfunctional life he had. Because once he could stand up and walk, his life would be very different from the way it had been for the past thirty-eight years!

Healing can begin with self-awareness and a motivation to break free from past hurts and wounds. This man had to be willing to

leave his routine and start a new life, a healthier life.

### **ZOOM**

Life can be like the iPad game “Zoom.” In this free game, that I just learned about this week, you look at the picture of something zoomed in and try to guess what it is. In other words, the object is magnified, and you only get to see one small portion of it. This reminds me of when Paul said, as recorded in 1st Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

### **GOD’S GREATER PLAN**

Our lives are like this. We only get to see a very small portion of God’s greater plan as it says in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

We tend to focus on just our personal lives and our small piece of the world. When things happen that we don’t expect or understand, we get frustrated and impatient. It might feel like God has abandoned us to the chaos of the world.

However, if we could see the larger picture - if we weren’t zoomed in only on our own problems - maybe patience and trust in God would come easier. Sometimes God gives us hints, through Scripture or through the help of others, as to how we have a chance to be made well through our faith that inspires a new hopeful perspective.

### **FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE**

Christ calls us to live with faith, hope, and love in all circumstances. The next time you feel like you just can’t figure out why you can’t get into the water when the angel comes, remember, there is more to life than that little zoomed in pool. God can see the whole picture and holds you in God’s loving embrace. Jesus invites you to heal in his way, to stand and take your mat and walk, trusting that you are not on the journey of life alone. Amen

### **Benediction:**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen**



**The Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway  
Presbyterian Church of the Roses  
2500 Patio Court  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**