

June 28,2020

Put a Fresh Wind in My Sail



John 5:1-9

- 1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals.**
- 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.**
- 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.**
- 4 From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.**

- 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”
- 7 Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”
- 8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”
- 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Special Music:

“Put a Fresh Wind In My Sail!”

Danny and Walt

It was the summer of 1973. I had just graduated from Western Hills High School in Fort Worth and looked forward to attending Oklahoma Baptist University in the fall on a ministerial scholarship. Everyone has some kind of story about what happened during the summer after graduation from High School and I'm no exception.

I, along with my best friend, Craig, had signed up to work that summer at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in Glorieta, New Mexico. It was going to be our summer adventure before setting off to college. We saw no reason to travel separately and Craig wanted to take his car. I was fine with that. It was a station wagon and it was in good shape, certainly capable of making the trip.

So we set off, two emboldened wannabe adults, ready to take on the world. Everything was going great. Spending time in fellowship with Craig was good for my soul. Craig was a great kid. He was called to the ministry, just as I was, so we had a lot in common. Together, we had started the Christian Prayer Club at school and over time we had become the best of friends. I was in awe of Craig. He had lost his mother and his father was an invalid. Craig, at the age of 15, had become the caretaker of the family home and also his brother.

The journey from Fort Worth to Glorieta was a long one. It was going to be about a nine hour drive through some of the hottest and flattest country on the planet in

the middle of summer. The AC in Craig's car worked great, so we really weren't worried about the heat and we made sure the gas tank was full before we hit the New Mexico border. Then, somewhere on the other side of Santa Rosa, New Mexico, in the middle of the desert, we blew a radiator hose. Anti-freeze sprayed all over the windshield and the car quickly overheated. We pulled over to the side of the road, rolled down the windows and went through a decision-making process of what to do next. Now, this was long before everyone had cell phones and to be honest with you, this was a very desolate highway. There was no way to walk to the nearest town which was almost 60 miles away. We didn't have anything to fix the hose and we didn't have enough water to refill the radiator. The temperature was right at 110 degrees which can be pretty miserable when there is no tree to provide any shade and that station wagon basically became an oven in that overbearing heat.

Together, we decided that our best option was to try and flag someone down and then Craig would go into the next town and either buy a radiator hose or bring a tow truck back. I would stay with the car. It took us over an hour to convince someone to stop and provide Craig with a ride. It was over three hours before I he would get back. Three hours in an oven in the middle of the desert and I admit that I was getting concerned that something might have happened to him and that he wouldn't make it back. Three hours for my mind to wander to places that it shouldn't. I had run out of water and we had no food in the car and like I said, there was no walking to the next populated town..

Have you ever been in that type of situation? You know what I am talking about. A place or a time when you find yourself so utterly alone and totally dependent on someone else to make things right? Maybe you needed water, food, or shelter. Maybe you just needed someone to talk to, to take an interest in your plight. Maybe you found yourself beaten and lying beside the road like the man in the Good Samaritan Story. Sometimes, all you need is just a smile or a word of encouragement to get you going again when you are stuck. There is really nothing equivalent to that feeling of being totally alone and unable to take care of your basic needs. If only I had a little water. If only I had a little food. If only I could find a little shade. If only I could get into the pool when the water is disturbed. If only someone would help me just a little, I could make it. I could fix it. I could survive.

One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

The Pool of Bethesda is located in Jerusalem near the Sheep's gate. It is believed that its name comes from the Aramaic words 'Beth' and 'hesda', which roughly translated means house of mercy. The story of the Pool of Bethesda seems to only be found in the Gospel of John, but it is believed to have been built in the 8th century BC, by building a dam to catch rainwater, thus creating a small reservoir. Over the course of history, the pool was covered over and only rediscovered by archeologists in the late 19th century.

During the time of Christ's ministry on earth, the Jews believed that every so often, an angel would come down and touch the waters of the pool, creating a disturbance. They also believed that the first person to enter the pool after such an occurrence, would be healed. For this reason, the pool was a very busy place, filled with sick and injured people all around. When the water was disturbed, they would all rush to be the first to enter the pool so that they could be healed. Pity the poor soul that was so infirm that they had no chance of getting into the pool ahead of the masses that were not disabled.

Such was the condition of the man in our story who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. We don't really know how long he had been waiting at the pool but people who came to the pool pretty much considered it their only hope for healing so I would surmise that he had been there for years. And every time the water is disturbed, he is using every ounce of his strength to try to get into the

pool before anyone else. Only to be disappointed over and over and over again because, unlike our story last week where the man's four friends lowered him through the roof, this man had no one to help him into the pool.

This invalid man considers the Pool of Bethesda his only hope. So much so that his sole focus is getting into the pool first. He has blinders on that prevent him from looking at any other option. His focus is so intent and his vision so myopic that he truly believes he can get into the pool and be healed if only someone will help him. He wants desperately to be healed. And although he fails over and over again, he continues to try. Isn't that what they say about insanity. Doing the same thing in the same way over and over again expecting a different result?

I want you to picture this scene. The pool is still and the area is littered with people who want desperately to be healed. Jesus enters this pool area and from wall to wall he finds people that are sick, invalid and dying. And He walks up to... this man. Why this man? There are people all around Him that need healing, but He picks this man out of the crowd to talk to. But remember, our scripture today tells us this: **“When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time.”** Jesus must have been asking some questions because he learned that the man had been sick for a very long time. Jesus is not looking for an easy case. He is not looking for a newbie to the pool. He is seeking out someone who had been there for so long that they had all but given

up hope. And then Jesus asks the man what seems to be a truly absurd question. **“Do you want to get well?”** Jesus knows how long this man has been waiting to get into the pool. Jesus knows that this man is desperate. And Jesus knows what this man is going to say. Jesus is not trying to be hard on him. He is trying to get him to stop focusing on the past. He wants him to break the cycle. He is trying to show him a new, more viable option, but He can't do that if the man is only willing to continue on a path that will never give him fulfillment.

Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

The man has come to the inevitable conclusion after all these years that if someone does not help him, if someone does not show mercy to him, if someone does not drag him to the water, he can never be healed. The absolute only path to healing is for someone to put him in the water at just the right time. Now, Jesus is not an unknown figure and he has his followers around him. You just have to wonder if this man who has struggled for so long really doesn't recognize who Jesus is. Does he not understand that he is in the presence of the healer known as Jesus? And yet, he doesn't ask Jesus to heal him. Instead he complains about not having anyone to help him into the pool. He has allowed his fixation on the process to blind him to the actual fulfillment of his needs.

Isn't that what we do all the time. We get so focused on our own solutions that we can't even see the problem anymore. We put on our blinders and forget that we serve a God who is the Creator of the Universe and He has His own solutions to our problems. But we want our solutions. We want someone to drag us into the pool. We become so fixated on the process that we stop seeing at the problem and nothing will deter us or allow us to question our own solution. "I want someone to drag me to the pool. If you will only drag me to the pool, my problem will be solved." All the while Jesus is begging us to bring him the problem instead of the solution.

"Do we want to get well?"

"Do we want a way out of the financial mess we are in?"

"Do we want our marriages to work?"

"Do we want to find grace and peace at our workplaces?"

"Do we want your church to grow?"

"Do we want to find new ways to reach into our community?"

"Do we want to understand and speak into our children and grandchildren?"

"Do we want to end racism?"

"Do we truly want to get well and see healing in our broken world"

Jesus has the answer to all these questions if we will just take time to listen to what He is telling us, instead of trying to convince Him to help us to do it our way.

Jesus is like a Fresh wind in this man's sail. Instead of acknowledging process that this man has been going about all these years so that he can be healed, Jesus simply tells him to "Get up and Walk."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

No dragging the man to the pool. No attempt to get into a race with everyone else trying to be the first into the pool. Jesus doesn't even acknowledge this man's solution, one that the man has invested in and fixated on for years. Jesus just shows up and tells the man to get up and walk. And the truly important point to catch here is that the man doesn't argue with Jesus. He doesn't say "Well, that will never work" or "That's not the way things work around here" or "We've never done it that way." He just gets up, takes his mat and walks. Why do we, as Christians, insist on doing it our way when Jesus' solution is always best one.

You know, when Craig showed up with that wrecker after I had spent three hours in that oven of a station wagon, I did not question him about why he chose the wrecker solution, I didn't ask him why it took so long, I didn't try to get him to understand that there might be a better way. All I cared about was that Craig showed up to Put a Fresh Wind in My Sail. I didn't need to know why he made the decisions that he did. The man at the pool didn't need to know why Jesus chose to do things a different way. He just needed to believe and allow the process to

work. He had to be willing to allow his mind to accept that there might be another way. After all, his way wasn't getting the job done. Jesus Put a Fresh Wind in His Sail. Jesus gave him hope in the midst of his suffering. Jesus pulled him off the hamster wheel and took care of the problem. While we form committees and look for human solutions, Jesus is standing in the middle of the room, blue prints in hand, ready to solve our problems.

It is true that those blue prints may not match the solution we are looking for. They may not match the budget we have in mind. They may not include the resources that we are willing to commit. But they are not plans that are defined and designed by a finite human mind. They are plans created by an infinite, unlimited God who has resources, connections and vision that is not dependent on human input.

We need to remember that God gave Noah the plans and instructions for building the ark. He never asked for Noah's opinion. God never asked Moses if it was a good idea for him to return to Egypt and rescue the Hebrews from slavery. God never asked David what he thought with regards to his upcoming battle with Goliath. God never asked Nehemiah if he thought that rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was a good idea. God did not form a committee to design the temple that Solomon built. When Elijah challenged the prophet of Baal and then built the altar in the desert, God didn't seek his opinion on the best course of action.

When we decide we don't need God's plans, we wind up with a tower of Babel. We may or may not get our project built, but the result will never be what God intended. God's plans will always be better than man's plans. God never looks at the available resources. He creates the resources. God never looks at our abilities and talents. He provides us with the skills and talents that we need to complete His plans. That may mean that we have to step aside at times and let God use someone else with the correct skillset to accomplish something.

So this week, I want us all to try this. We need to stop trying to drag ourselves into the pool. We need to stop asking God to drag us into the pool. We need to stop asking God to send someone to drag us into the pool. I want us all to take our eyes off of the pool, our perceived solutions to our problems. Instead, **“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”** We need to trust God's plan for our lives. Letting go is hard. Faith is hard. But if we truly want to get well, if we truly want a Godly solution to our problems, if we truly want to be all that God wants us to be, we have to give into His plan. We have to lean into Jesus. That is the only way we can know the blessings he has in store for each of us. **“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”**

AMEN

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