DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?
Series: “Key Questions from the Bible”
October 13, 2019 –John 5: 1-15
The Church of the Covenant

So Jesus comes up to a man who is infirm and who has lain by the Pool of Bethzatha for 38 years and asks: “Do you want to be healed?” (John 5: 6) The infirm man has engaged in the conventional wisdom of the way healing might occur. Evidently, they believed that when the water was stirred in the pool there at Bethzatha that an angel had stirred the water and they believed that whoever was placed in the pool first would be healed. Conventional wisdom of the time; state of the art at the time, without a doubt. But Jesus has been sent by the Spirit to seek out this man who was about to be healed. It isn’t stirred water that heals. It isn’t an angel who heals. It isn’t who gets in the water first that heals. Who is it that heals? Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be healed by the healer?

All of us, I think, face issues in our lives which require healing. Some, to be sure, are healing of the body. But others may be healing of the soul. Or perhaps we need the healing of our griefs and pain in our spirit. Our broken-ness. Or perhaps we have struggled with some issue in our life for far too long. Or perhaps we have tried to believe but we just can’t quite get 100% there—“I believe, help thou my unbelief”. Perhaps we have some ongoing besetting sin that restricts and destroys our relationship with the Lord and we know it. Every human being has issues. Every person is sitting by the pool at Bethzatha. Everyone has their “deal” and the things from which they need to be healed. And it is amazing how passively we may sit and wait for someone else to put us in the water. How we just give up and learn to deal with the pain rather than seeking out the remedy. We don’t go to the doctor and, O, we do not go to doctor Jesus. How we trust in angels and stirred waters and the conventional wisdom rather than the Creator and Sustainer and Redeemer, the very ONE who has come to heal us...

This is a sermon about what really keeps us out of the Pool of Bethzatha. This is a sermon about all the negative self-talk that destroys the ability to have spiritual breakthroughs and to be healed. If you want to be healed, keep listening. If you don’t want to be healed stop listening now...If you study this Bible passage with some care you see why the man could not be healed. When Jesus asks him, “Do you want to be healed?” he whines around with sad and sorry explanations. —“No one will put me in the water. I can’t do this on my own. These other people push me out of the way.” The infirm man has come to believe his own negative self-talk. He has constructed his reality and repeats it over and over again like a statement of faith. Except its really unbelief. He has created a false narrative which he believes to be true. Repeat something enough in your own head and you’ll believe it is the truth. His negative self talk tape is on an endless circulating loop, repeated over and over again. 38 years of negative self talk and everything he cannot do. The negative tape—“It is impossible to be healed. It is not at all possible for me. I have tried everything and nothing works. I am too weak. I am unable. I cannot do it. There is no hope. No one really cares. No one really hears. Is there no one who hears me and cares and will place me in the Pool at Bethzatha?” Negative self-talk. When you tune your ear to hear it and you hear it in others, it is then interesting how it is ever so self-evident why the person is not healed. I am a pastor; I know the difference between negative self-talk and faith. They don’t believe they can be healed. They’re working against themselves. They don’t really want it badly enough to be healed. That’s why Jesus came to the man and asked him the question we all need to hear —“Do you want to be healed?”

Negative self-talk is the opposite of belief. We may say we believe in God but what we say to ourselves in our own head may not line up with that belief. Do you want to believe you can be healed? Do you
believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the divine healer? Do you really believe in Him? Do you want to be healed?

When I was the pastor in Hickory, and that will tell you how long ago this was, I thought I was superman and was going to pull out three dead yew trees in the front yard of the manse. You know, I still thought I was 16 years old at least in my head. Got to the last of the three yews and it wouldn’t budge; I dug and I dug; and I tugged and I tugged. And I thought to myself, “I'll just give it one more heave ho and out it will go.” One, two, three –KERPOPP! Only the sound I heard wasn’t the yew tree letting go, it was my back going out of place. And that set me on a multiple year pilgrimage of doctor visits and therapy sessions and pain medication. And increasingly I would have more and more episodes with my back.

Three, four, five times a year of being incapacitated for three to five days at a time. There was a Sunday morning when I woke up and I was in such pain I couldn’t get out of bed. I had to call and someone else had to preach. I would live my life in fear of hurting my back again, being overly careful. There was much I wouldn’t do because of my back. I cancelled a mission trip which I love, because my back went out. One time my back was so bad I could only stand to lie on a tile floor in my sunroom. It was announced in church that I wouldn’t be there because of my bad back. So you know, helpful Christians, every 5 minutes, when I would just get comfortable lying on the tile floor, some kind member of the congregation would call, and I’d have to get up in much pain to answer the phone, because I knew if I didn’t they’d send over the state police just sure I was dead on the floor! My negative self-tape? It was everything I cannot do because I am a bad back sufferer. Repeated over and over again so many times I actually believed it. All the conventional wisdom didn’t help. When you have a bad back everyone in the universe has a remedy for you. So finally I’m reading my Bible and I read this verse where Jesus asks the man, “Do you want to healed?” and I realized Jesus was talking to me. And I remember thinking, “And I don’t want to wait 38 years to be healed”. And I went away on a men’s retreat that weekend. And the retreat speaker asked us to take some cardboard and turn it into a headstone that would be placed on our grave. He asked us to write on it where we were in that moment. And I wrote on my tombstone –“He would have been a pretty good Pastor except he had a bad back. Amen.” “I’m a pastor. Do I believe Jesus can heal or don’t I?”

The FIRST STEP was allowing my belief in Jesus as the Son of God and ultimate HEALER to erase my negative self- tapes. Stop speaking fear and doubt and what GOD CANNOT DO and start speaking faith and belief and knowing what GOD CAN DO! THE SECOND STEP was to do what Jesus says, “Rise, take up your pallet and walk.” (John 5: 8) There’s something Jesus is asking you to do; He will wait for you to do it before He will bring His healing power to bear. Second step is a step of obedience to Him and to His voice and what He’s asking you to do. First step, Faith and Belief cancels out the negative self-talk and erases the negative tapes in your head with positive tapes of scripture and faith. Second step: in obedience to HIM do what He shows you to do. Our obedience to His voice opens the door of healing.

So I did the back exercises I was supposed to do, prompted by Jesus; gentle strengthening and stretching exercises every day. Its been 25 years and I still do them every day. Its not the exercises that heal me, its my faith and trust in Jesus that gets me up every morning with minimal pain. If I get an Xray an orthopaedic surgeon still looks at my disks in my lower back and tells me I need immediate surgery. But each day the Lord is good and I don’t. IF I CAN DO THIS YOU CAN DO THIS. RISE, PICK UP YOUR PALLET IN JESUS’ NAME AND WALK! We’re all just sitting by the Pool of Bethzatha, waiting for someone to come. Jesus has come to you today...Do you really want to be healed?

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!