

Questions From John for Lent and Easter:

“Do You Want To Be Healed?”

John 5:1-15

This is a curious little story from the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus. He comes across a man who apparently has suffered for 38 years from an ailment that affects his mobility, so he's lying on a mat. He's at a pool called Bethesda in Jerusalem. This is a very unique pool. It is believed that some underwater phenomenon, possibly an underwater spring or gas vent, stirred up the water in the pool periodically. The Jews believed that if the angels were stirring p the pool and if you could be the first one in the water when it was stirred up you could be healed.

So this unnamed man was lying there in hopes of being healed. However, his mobility difficulty made his being first in the pool less than likely.

Jesus asks Him an unexpected question. He does not ask the man, “Do you need some help?” He does not ask him, “Would you like us to help get you into the water?” He does not even ask him about his ailment: “What is your problem?” or “How long have you been ill?”

No, Jesus asks him, “Do you want to be healed?”

At first glance, this seems like a question to which the answer should be self-evident. The man is obviously ill, why wouldn't he want to be healed? He is sitting near a pool believed to have

curative powers, why else would he be there except that he wanted to be made well? And who, in their right mind, would prefer being sick and hampered in their movements to being healthy and able to move around freely? What is Jesus thinking?

But when we look at the situation, we realize that Jesus is not being foolish or obtuse. Jesus undoubtedly knows that there are those in every society who would prefer begging to working, who make thousands of dollars each year appealing to the sympathies of their fellowman with their illnesses, injuries, or disabilities. Such was the case in First Century Judaism.. So Jesus is not amiss in asking the question. It could be that the is perfectly happy with his situation in life and would prefer it to continue.

Apparently, however, the man would like to be healed, because his answer sort of indicates it. It say, “sort of” because he doesn’t really answer Jesus’ question, does he?

Rather than a simple “Yes”, he goes into an explanation of the logistics of his situation, the reason why he is finding it difficult to be healed. Instead of responding to Jesus with a simple, “Yes, sir, I would like to be healed”, he, in effect, tells Jesus why he cannot be healed.

In doing so, he makes himself part of the problem instead of contributing to the solution.

Some things never change, and never will. Ask a person today if they would like to be saved, and there is 99% certainty that you will not get a simple “Yes” or “No”.

You will more likely get a story, or an excuse. “I was made to go to church when I was a child, so I don’t want anything to do with the church.”

“We just can’t find time to go to church right now. We have soccer games, or, we’re trying to put a new lawn in, or Sunday is the only morning we can sleep in.”

Or, “We’re not church people; we wouldn’t fit in.” Or, “Christians are bigoted, narrow-minded, nasty people. I don’t want to have anything to do with them.”

Well, that’s wasn’t really the question; the question was “Do you want to be saved?” It’s a simple “Yes” or “No.”

In the case of the man at the pool, he was being asked a question about his health by the one who could heal him, by the only one who could heal him. Now, in the man’s defense, he did not know who he was speaking to; that much comes out later in the text when the Pharisees ask him who healed him and he doesn’t know.

But what the man almost missed because he did not simply answer the question Jesus posed!

And now many people today are missing out on eternal salvation for the very same reason. They're not answering the question, "Do you want to be saved?" Rather, they're giving answers based on what they can or will or can't or won't do, answers often based on erroneous misconceptions.

A simple 'Yes', would get them the simple truth. That God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life." That salvation is a free gift, by God's grace through faith in Christ. That it's not what we can or will or can't or won't do; it's what Jesus has done on the cross and in the tomb by taking the punishment for our sins, dying the death we deserved and rising from the dead.

How inexpressibly sad is it that people are missing out on eternal life simply because they are not answering God's very simple and direct question with a simply "yes, I want to be saved!"?

But how equally sad is it that those who are saved are missing out, also?

We who are baptized children of God, who are believers in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, know this wonderful good news. And yet we often make a mistake very similar to that made by the man at the pool.

What the man almost missed out on was being the beneficiary of Jesus' awesome power, the power to heal him.

That is the very same power that Jesus makes available to us who know Him as Lord and Savior. It is the very same power He offers to us when He says, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you," and "Whatever you ask believing in my name, the Father will give to you.", and "If two or three of you agree on anything, believing, My Father will grant it to you."

God makes the same power available to us to deal with our needs and our struggles that He made available to the man at the pool.

He makes the same power available to us to help us to be healed every day.

For even though we are saved through faith in Jesus, we are by no means perfected. Everyday, in many ways, there is room for us to grow in faith, in the wisdom of God, and in walking the Christian life.

Every day God is asking us through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, "Do you want to grow? Do you want to be stronger in faith? Do you want to live a more Christ-like life?"

And everyday we either ignore the question or we give all the reasons, why this is not a good time for us to deal with that, or why it really can't happen right now.

"I can't devote the time to it right now, Lord," "I'm so busy right now, I can't fit in another prayer time or time for daily Bible reading", "I've got so many projects going right now, so many demands on my time, I really can't add anything else right now."

Wrong answers. Don't try to think two steps past God. Just answer the question for yourself, Yes or No. Do you want to grow in your faith? Do you want to grow in your daily walk with Christ? Do you want to be better at living out our faith in your life?

A simple yes or no. Anything else is a denial of the power of God. Anything else says God can't make it happen.

The man gave an non-responsive answer, but Jesus healed him anyway. Maybe he wanted to demonstrate to the man the power that God was making available to him; maybe it was for us to read 2000 years later so that we might see that power and know that it is available to us.

Lent is the time of repentance and re-evaluation. It's a great time to ask these questions without anticipating what God can't do in our lives.

Scripture assures us, With God nothing is impossible.

Do you want to grow? Do you want to live a more Christ-honoring life? Do you want help with the problems that have been defying your resolutions. Do you want the power of God applied to the struggles you are dealing with? Say, Yes, and watch the awesome power of God be revealed In your life. Say Yes, and invite Him into the solution, to be the solution.

Say Yes to God's gracious offer of help and power to deal with your challenges. Say Yes to God's gracious offer to make you the person He – and you – want you to be.