

GET UP! PICK UP YOUR MAT AND WALK

John 5:1-9a

Key Verse: 5:8

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’”

Through yesterday’s passage, John 4, Jesus came to give the gift of God, which is the living water welling up to eternal life. People are thirsty for many things; money and pleasure, worldly glory and honor, love and recognition. They go after them, believing that they will be satisfied when they have them, but nothing in this world can satisfy our soul. When people chase after worldly things, they become like the Samaritan woman who was a slave of her desire. When she met Jesus Christ, her soul was truly satisfied for the love and forgiveness of God. Jesus understood her true desire, the desire to worship God, and came to save her. Deep down in our hearts, we are also waiting for the savior to come and save us from our sins and misery. Thank God for sending Jesus to each one of us. May God help us to drink the living water and satisfy our thirsty souls with his love and forgiveness in Christ. Amen.

In today’s passage, Jesus visited sick people during a feast of the Jews and healed the worst invalid man by the power of his word. When the invalid man heard the word of Jesus, he was completely healed. Through this passage, we learn the grace of Christ and the power of Jesus’ word. May God bless each one of us to learn the biblical chemistry through this passage. Amen.

I. Do You Want to Get Well (1-6).

Look at verse 1-2, “Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 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.” Jesus went up to Jerusalem in order to observe a feast of the Jews. Biblical scholars say that this was the feast of Passover. The Jews celebrate the feast for a week as a national holiday in remembrance of God’s salvation from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The Sheep Gate was established at the time of Nehemiah by the high priest for the people of Israel to bring sheep and lambs as a sacrificial offering. There was a pool with five porches for a sick, which was called Bethesda, a house of mercy. Here we find a symbolic meaning for Jesus to come to this place for he was going to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, delivering people from the bondage of sin and the power of the devil.

To the Jews, the feast was the time of great joy and celebration, but there were people who could not enjoy it due to their sicknesses. **Look at verse 3, “Here a great number**

of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.” These sicknesses were incurable at that time, which was considered as God’s curse. How sad it could have been for these sick people! Maybe they were forgotten by their family members and relatives for they had been in that way for a long time. While all other Jews celebrating God’s salvation, eating delicious food and having fellowship with God and others, these sick people could be crying with tears of helplessness and hopelessness. Moreover, they would feel cursed by God and abandoned by their own people. The Jews tried to avoid them as if they did not exist. When they met these sick people on a street by chance, they act as if they got into an accident, saying, “Oops! Or ouch!” These sick people were the unnecessary from the society. But they had one hope. According to verse 7, people believed that they would be healed from any sickness if they jump into the pool first when it was stirred, probably by an angel. Each one of them was waiting for the chance of being healed. So they were lying in five porches, looking at the water in the corner of their eyes.

The scene of Bethesda resembles of this world with full of sin-sick people. The blind and the paralyzed can be friends, helping each other, especially for jumping into the water. The blind cannot see when the water was stirred, and the paralyzed cannot jump into the water by oneself. So the paralyzed would tell the blind when the water was stirred and the blind could carry the paralyzed to get into the water. But they have to agonize on the question; who is going to jump in first and be healed? What would you do if you are in that kind of situation? Would you yielded when you may have one and only chance in your lifetime to be healed? Have you been cheated by your friend who told you to go in first? Is your heart is still broken and in need of healing? Or have you jumped in first and need forgiveness?

Look at verse 5-6, “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?’” Jesus came to the feast but did not enjoy it. He visited the sick who needed God’s mercy the most. Jesus was walking around these five porches and stopped on one person. By appearance, it was obvious that he was there for a longtime. Maybe he accumulated a lot of garbage around him and smelt awful even from far away. Later, it was found that he was paralyzed for almost four decades. Even other sick people would not come around this notorious invalid. Among all the sick people, Jesus came to the worst and most hopeless person. Why? **First, it was to reveal the glory of God.** By healing the worst, people cannot deny the power of God in Christ. **Secondly, it was to plant the hope of God in Christ.** When all the sick witness the worst is healed, they also can find hope of being healed in Christ. In the same

way, Jesus came to the worst enemy, Saul, who was persecuting the church of God, and changed him to be his instrument. Is there anyone who feel hopeless or in the worst situation in your life? It may be the time for Jesus to come and change so that you know that it is God who healed. May Jesus visit and reveal his glory and power.

What did Jesus say to this worst invalid person? Jesus said, **“Do you want to get well?”** It seems obvious that he would like to be healed. Why was he lying by the pool anyway? After Jesus learned that the invalid was in this condition for a long time, he said, **“Do you want to get well.”** The key was the length of sickness. At the beginning of sickness, usually the person and/or the family members have a great hope to be healed, going after one doctor and another if they can afford. But as the time goes by, the hope gets smaller. Probably, after ten years of living in this condition, he began to adapt himself in his circumstances. After 20 years, the life in Bethesda could become his lifestyle he was comfortable with. After 30 years, he could not think about living in a different way of life. He was in this condition for longer than the life most of people have lived in here. His hope of being healed was too small to be recognized in his heart. What hope? To this hopeless man, Jesus challenged, saying, **“Do you want get well?”** This means, “Do you want to **be changed**, no more lying down on a smelly mat, no more pity party, and no more collecting garbage? Imagine living a life to the **fullness of your potential**, walking, jumping and running with joy and strength!” “Do you want to live **not as a cursed** with guilty conscience but as **a child of God** with full of God’s grace and love?” “Do you want to live a life, **not as a paralyzed** but as a normal human being, working hard **for the glory of God** and for others?” **Jesus rekindled the hope of God in his heart.**

Jesus also wants to rekindle the hope of God to each one of us. Of course, we are not an invalid physically, but each one of us has something make us paralyzed and powerless to do something constructive or to live a life to the full as God has intended you to live. Sometimes, we might have been in that condition for a longtime and become comfortable living in the same way. Jesus is challenging us, saying, **“Do you want to get well?”** **“Do you want to be healed from the spiritual sin sickness?”** **“Do you want to be healed from the old habit?”** **“Do you want to live with the hope of God, overcoming fear and despair?”** **“Do you want to receive the power of God which will strengthen you to do something constructive for the kingdom of God and for yourself as well?”**

II. Get UP and Pick Up Your Mat (7-9a).

What was the response of the invalid? **Look at verse 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.’”** He should have answered, “Yes, sir, I

want to get well.” Instead, he complained that no one was helping him to get into the water first. At first, it seems his statement was reasonable because he could not get into the water without someone’s help. But it was the mentality he was invalid not only physically but also mentally and spiritually. People had helped him due to his illness for 38 years. They carried him around when he needed to go somewhere. They provided him a mat and a place to stay by the pool. They gave him food so that he could survive. He should have been very thankful to everyone who helped him and find a way to return the favor if he was a normal human being. In stead of being thankful, he began to abuse others’ favor, thinking that people should help him. Whenever they did not help him, he complained that they were selfish and owed him something big to him. He was complaining that everyone was selfish, trying to get into the water before him. For 38 years, he wasted his life, complaining about others instead of doing something constructive even for himself.

There is a saying that the world changes within ten years; maybe within 2 years in this computerized time and age. If he spent his time, doing something, he could establish something for himself. There was one person, Nick Vujicic, who were born without limbs; no feet, no arms but a shriveled foot, hanging on the low part of his body. Instead of complaining to God that he was born in that way, he thanked God. When he found himself before God, he realized that he was a precious human being made in God’s image. Then, he became an inspiration to many people; able and disabled, fortunate and unfortunate people, especially to those who lost their parts of body. He has been invited to innumerable meetings and schools as an inspirational speaker throughout the world with a motto; no arms, no leg, no worries, no limits. He can play soccer, swim, golf, and most of all praise God and encourage people. His testimony tells us that it is not physical body or circumstances limits people but paralyzed hearts and minds.

What about you? What limits you to do the things you want to do? If you think, it is your physical condition or circumstances, listen to what Jesus tells the invalid. **Look at verse 8, “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’”** Let’s think about the word of Jesus deeply. Interestingly, Jesus did not help him to get up except commanding him to get up, pick up his mat and walk, which seemed too much for the paralyzed man. When Jesus met different kinds of sick people, he healed them in different ways. When he opened the eyes of the blind man in John 9, he made a mud with saliva and put it on the man’s eyes. When he healed the deaf and mute man, he put his fingers into man’s ears. But this time, he did neither assist him to stand up nor even touch his leg except his command. When the invalid man listened to Jesus’ command, the word of Jesus began to circulate his heart; **Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.** The word of

Jesus encouraged him to get up from his paralysis. Jesus command was undeniable; calling him to pick up the old and smelly mat he was lying on and start a new life.

What happened to the invalid man? **Look at verse 9a, “At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”** The power of Jesus’ word circulated the body of the invalid man. The new muscles and nerves were created in each part of his body. When he tried to put his two feet, he felt new strength in his leg and thigh. When he got up by himself by the power of Jesus’ word, he looked at himself and was so amazed, jumping with great joy and shouting, “I got up. Now I can stand by myself.” Yet he did not forget Jesus’ command, **“Pick up your mat and walk.”** He looked at the mat, which was disgusting; the dirty and smelly mat he had laid for 38 years. It was the old mat of sorrow and despair. It was the old way of life, complaining and unthankful. It was the accumulation of dirty and smelly way of life he was living on. He did not know why he was always lying there doing nothing but complaining, saying, “No one is helping me.” Now he had to clean his old mass and start a new life. He could not imagine let others clean that dirty mat. With great joy, he picked up his mat and was walking like a normal human being for the first time in his life.

Here we learn the chemistry of Jesus’ healing power. The healing power of Jesus comes from the life giving word of Jesus. When the invalid man heard the word of Jesus, he was healed. This tells us that whoever hears Jesus’ word, he or she can be healed because his word is life giving. Jesus said in **John 5:25, “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”** In John 11, at the command of Jesus, Lazarus, who was dead for three days, came out of the tomb and started walking and living a second life. However, hearing the word of Jesus is not just simple hearing as if listen to a pop music or to CNN news. It is hearing the word of Jesus and believing in one’s heart until he or she experiences the power of Jesus’ words. In the last part of John 4, when the father heard the promise of Jesus, **“Your son will live,”** after listening to the news that his son was dead, how much he had to struggle to believe in Jesus’ word. Even though Jesus’ physical body was not with him, **he took Jesus at his word.** When he was struggling to hold on to Jesus’ word more than his circumstances, in fact, **Jesus was with him and he was with Jesus.** Finally, the father could experience the healing power of Jesus, raising his son from the dead without the presence of Jesus. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us; those who listen and believe in Jesus’ word will see the glory of the One and Only son of God. Jesus again said in John 15:7a, **“If you remain in me and my words remain in you.”** May God help each one of us to hear the word of Jesus and

believe until we experience the power of Jesus' word in our lives. May God grant us faith in the power of Jesus' word and share it with the confidence in its power. Amen.

I was born in Seoul Korea as the youngest son of a gentle father and a loving mother. As a youngest son, I was loved by my parents the most, but I was a strong willed child, not listening to anybody and doing whatever I wanted. When I entered a college, I thought that I was free to do whatever I wanted, skipping classes and partying. Soon I realized that I was not free but became a slave of pride, lust and laziness, which paralyzed me. After I failed my freshman year, I totally despaired and ran away to the Korean army, hoping to reorganize my life through human discipline. After the army service, I came back to college and tried to study hard. But this time, I began to worry and became anxious all the time. Even though I studied hard, I could not take a test well due to anxiety attack. When I was in deep despair after midterm exam, God invited me through a friend of mine. During 1:1 Bible study, I heard God's word in Genesis 1:1. When I trusted in God who created the whole universe and me in his image, God freed me from worries and anxieties. After listening to Matthew 6:33, I decided to concentrate all my energy on growing in Christ and study hard for the glory of God, trusting that God would provide all my needs, especially my half. Though I spent less time on my school study and more time serving the work of God, my grades got better than before. Without knowing it, God healed me from laziness. Believe it or not, the worst subject in my college year in Korea was Calculus, but I became a math teacher. Among math classes, my worst subject was statistics. But God challenged me to go beyond my ability and granted me a Ph.D. in applied statistics. When I think about my God, he is the God who has challenged me to overcome my weaknesses, one after another. He has been saying, "Well, I will teach you how to overcome your limitations." When I prayed to be proactive toward God's challenge, God granted me **James 1:2-4**. In this year, God has given me trials of many kinds in order to challenge my impatience. Thanks be to God who enabled me to hold on to the word of God through writing it everyday. May God help me to grow mature one step higher through perseverance, beginning from my work place. May God help me not to depend on my skills or circumstances but the power of God's word in raising disciples. May God reveal the power of God's word as I hold onto it. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Through today's passage, we learned that Jesus challenged the invalid man, rekindling his desire to be healed from 38 years old sickness. When the invalid man heard the word of Jesus, he was healed. May God bless each one of us to hold on to the life giving word of God, until we experience the power Jesus' word in our hearts and life. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.