



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

September 22, 2013
"Do You want to Be Healed?" (God's Questions For Us Series)
The Rev. Dr. Dan Chun

John 5:1 *After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

John 5:2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes.

John 5:3 In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

John 5:4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain times into the pool, and stirred up the water. Whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had.

John 5:5 One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

John 5:6 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?"

John 5:7 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."

John 5:8 Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk."

John 5:9 At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a Sabbath.

John 5:10 So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat."

John 5:11 But he answered them, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk.'"

John 5:12 They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take it up and walk'?"

John 5:13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there.

John 5:14 Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you."

John 5:15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

John 5:16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the Sabbath.

We are ending our series today on Questions from God. And we come to this challenging question: Do you want to be made well?

Do you want to get healed? Do you want to feel *mo bettah*?

As many of you know, I had a bad accident at the beach in August

during a stand-up paddle boarding session. The accident was a result of four things —from a wipeout to tourists getting in my way—that all lined up to create a perfect storm. It's too complicated to explain, but the result was a sprained MCL in my right knee. It was very painful. If you have ever hurt a joint, like a knee, a hip, or an elbow, you know it is not Disneyland.

It happened a week before I was to go to New York to take my son to Hunter College in Manhattan, New York City for his freshman year. So sad, especially since he's our youngest. I was really bummed about being injured just before the trip because I knew the trip would mean a lot of walking, and going up and down stairways to subways. I should have been resting the knee, but I knew I couldn't and that I would have to walk.

So if someone were to ask me, "Would I want to be made well," I would have shouted, "Yes!" I really wanted to get healed not because of only the pain, but also because of the long walks in airports and cities, and a long, direct ten-hour plane flight to New Jersey.

I wanted to get healed. It hurt lying in bed, sitting, and walking. People prayed for me, for which I'm very grateful. In addition, I went to see an orthopedic surgeon. X-rays showed a sprain of the right knee, meaning small micro-tears in the MCL. He referred me to physical therapy.

Give me the works, I said, so I had my knee put in freezing cold leg wrappings. I had it put in hot wrappings. I had ultrasound waves bombarding my knee. I had electrical impulses charging me from an electric wand. Physical therapists gently pulled and stretched my leg. I did slow squats with my back on a slide to strengthen it.

I was desperate. I had to improve. I wanted less pain for the New York trip. Gotta get well. So then, a friend of mine recommended acupuncture. I wanted to get healed, so I went, and I was surprised that the acupuncture really helped!

Did I want to get healed? Yes, for ten days I was prayed for, poked, pricked, prodded, pulled, pushed, chilled, warmed, and electrified! What a great way to spend a sabbatical! Sooooo relaxing. But I felt better.

The plane flight, however, made my knee stiff. And soon in the first few days at New York, my knee was hurting again. I wasn't resting it. I was limping down the streets. I was limping so bad that I felt if I held out a metal cup I could probably get donations for our church! Alms. Alms for the poor ... poor pastor, that is.

Pam and I planned to meet with a foundation that supports Hawaiian Islands Ministries. Their office is in the New York Times building. On the morning of the meeting, I woke up and said to God, "Lord, my knee really hurts. I am in New York. There is a big Chinatown here. Lord, I wonder if there is an acupuncturist I could see." I prayed about it, but I had zero idea of who to ask or see.

It was time for the 11-am meeting with the foundation. I tried to walk into the meeting with my knee brace hidden under my pants, but I couldn't help but limp in. Upon

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entering the boardroom, one of the Foundation directors took one look at me and said, "You need an acupuncturist, and I have just the one in mind." I couldn't believe it! Answered prayer! Hallelujah!

She said, "This acupuncturist has helped me with my allergies, back pain, neck pain, and shoulder pain. I never guarantee anything to anyone, but I GUARANTEE you that if you see my acupuncturist, your pain will disappear."

She said, "My husband is a psychiatrist and has medically and psychiatrically pooh-pooed acupuncture until one day his allergies were so bad that he gave in. He saw my acupuncturist and his allergies disappeared! This guy has helped all of my friends who have seen him. I guarantee it."

Amen, answered prayer! I am soooo there!

So off I went to see the doctor in the midst of Chinatown at 128 Mott Street. It turned out right to be near where my mom was born and raised. I limped into the acupuncturist's office, and the staff told me they only take cash. I thought, "You are so Chinese!" Fortunately, since I was traveling, I had a \$100 bill.

It turned out that this Chinese doctor was this world-renowned needle guy with a big reputation in the acupuncture field. This guy not only stuck me with needles but he also wired me up and put electrical wires on the needles, which sent little electrical charges to my arms and leg for twenty minutes. Mama mia! That's a one spicy acupuncture.

And lo and behold the next day, the pain was all gone. And to throw in more, one of our elders, Garrett Sullivan, texted and said that his small group prayed specifically for

healing for me that day. Prayer works! I really wanted to get healed, and I was.

Many of us have hurts and illnesses. The question is, Do YOU WANT to get healed? What stops us from moving forward and getting all of the help and health we need? We say we need to exercise but we don't. We say we need to eat more healthy, but we don't. We say we need to work on some emotional issues, but we won't see a therapist. We have an illness or injury or an emotional issue but we won't go to a healing service. So do we really want to get healed? Why don't we act on our desire to be better?

Our Bible text for today helps us with these questions. Our story in the Gospel of John chapter 5 is set in Jerusalem at a place called the pool of Bethzatha, which means "house of olives," or in some of your translations, Bethesda, like Bethesda, Maryland, which also means "house of mercy."

The Greek word used here for this *pool* is "kolumbethron," which comes from the word "kolumban," which means "to dive." Hence, this word was probably used to indicate this was a deep pool where people dove. Archaeology has shown that this pool had a subterranean stream, which occasionally disturbed the waters above.

Let's go back to verse 4: "*For an angel of the Lord went down at certain times into the pool, and stirred up the water. Whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had.* (John 5:4)

Most Bible translations don't have this verse 4 because they don't think it is a fact. Some translations though do put it in, and I put it in, because it does give an accurate cultural context and portrayal of beliefs back then.

Pagan and Jewish people came to this pool often because they believed that by bathing there they could get healed. Maybe there were some minerals in the water or whatever, but somehow they felt better after bathing there. So if you really wanted to get healed you would go there – if you were blind, lame, paralyzed, or sick.

But the K-Mart blue light special was when unexpectedly the waters suddenly bubbled up. Not knowing about the subterranean stream, people thought an angel was stirring up the waters. They believed that if they jumped into the water just when it was bubbling, they would get healed.

So let's get to the main character of the story. There is a man at the pool who has been sick for a really long time. I will call him Kimo the Chronic. Kimo can't walk. Kimo's been sick for 38 years! Remember this is first-century Israel. 38 years is nearly a lifetime for a man. Poor guy been sick all his life. So every day he comes to the pool hoping maybe this is the day he might get healed.

Then one day Jesus comes to the pool. Jesus sees Kimo and knew he had been sick for a long time. Jesus walks over to Kimo and asks the penetrating question that soars over the centuries to us today: Do you want to be made well?

And instead of saying yes or no, Kimo whines and says, "Sir, I have not one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up."

Notice that Jesus didn't ask, "What prevents you from getting healed?" He asked, "Do you want to get healed?"

Believing the legend of an angel coming unexpectedly to stir up the waters to bring healing, Kimo says, *"Do You Want To Be Healed?" Sept 22, 2013*

"When the water starts bubbling up and people are moving to get into the pool, no one helps me. There's no one to help me to get into the pool! And worse yet, when the bubbles start happening and I try to get into the pool, someone else steps in front of me and cuts in line!"

I hate it when people cut in line! Drives me crazy. It's the epitome of rudeness. This poor man. He deserved mercy, but people kept cutting in front of him, and who knows for how many years. Just when he thought the angel had stirred the waters and bubbly came, someone cut in front of him.

But Jesus wasn't asking why he wasn't getting healed.

This may not be your situation but sometimes when we are sick or emotionally down, we come with all of these excuses. We can throw a pity party at two am—Poor me. I'll never amount to anything. Look at all the odds against me. And just when life looks better and the bubbly begins, something or someone cuts me off, and there's no one to help me.

And Jesus says, "But my question is, do you want to get healed?"

Sometimes our anxiety or our self-pity can be self-fulfilled prophecies. We manufacture our own barriers as to why we won't get healed, why we won't eat better, or why we can't drink less. Oh, we are too busy to get that counseling appointment with that therapist, or too busy to read that self-help book, or to read the Bible, or to call up that friend, or to get that medical check-up. And Jesus asks, "Do you want to be made well?"

Not all healings are spectacular, instant, or come with the

bubbly. Sometimes healing comes with a plain old commitment to get well and to seek help whether it's, like in my case, to go to a surgeon, a physical therapist, or an acupuncturist, and/or to receive prayer from church members.

For me God's healing might take a while. Often it's medicine and the miraculous—doctors and praying people. I believe in medicine. God chooses to heal people that way. But sometimes He chooses to heal through prayer.

Hear this: if you really want to get healed, enough with the excuses! Seek out miraculous prayer in addition to medicine. Don't leave Jesus out of the solution. Sometimes the response to prayer is instant, other times it's not. The question is: Do you want to get healed?

In verse 8, Jesus doesn't wait to hear more excuses from Kimo. Right then and there He tells him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." And instantly the man gets healed. He gets up and walks. Amazing!

But it gets crazier in the story. Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath, and you would think any healing on any day—whether Sabbath or not—is a great thing. But religious Jews back then said, "Hey, healing someone on the Sabbath is work so you can't do that." In our story, they see the healed man carrying his mat on a Sabbath. They call him out for that because carrying your mat is considered work, and work on the Sabbath is against the religious law!

So they ask Kimo, "Who is this guy who told you to take up your mat and walk?" Notice they didn't ask who healed him or commented on how great and marvelous this is. Instead, they totally bypassed the amazing miracle by asking, "Who told you to pick up your mat?"

Man, this guy has been paralyzed for 38 years and he just got miraculously healed. Don't miss the point, people.

I do find it interesting that when miraculous healing does happen, there are always the doubters and cynics, and often they are Christians, religious people who say, "No, miracles don't happen today. My experience, my logic defies what the Bible says that miraculous healing is to be normal and for today."

I told you a few months ago how I prayed for a man who did not believe in Jesus. He did not know Jesus as Lord. This man had level IV lung cancer that had spread to his brain, and there was a tumor there too.

So one night after a long trip to California, friends pleaded with me to stay up and wait for their friend, whom I will call Jerry, to come over to where I was staying for some late night 10 pm prayer. I said yes, as I will pray for anyone who comes to me for prayer. Jerry came to the house. I prayed for him in the living room. He said he got warm and his whole body tingled. I guess the bubbly does happen sometimes.

Two weeks later the MRI showed the tumor in Jerry's brain was gone and the cancer in his lungs reduced 20%! So Jerry's friends, whom I will call Frank and Sally, called me on the phone. Sally said, "God healed him! It's a miracle!" But her husband Frank immediately said, "No, it must be the medicine they gave him." Frank quickly discounted God.

Ugh! That's missing the point of the healing and trying to reduce it by blocking out God from the picture. Who told you to pick up your mat?

Then Sally said, "How can you say to Dan it was the medicine from the doctors? Wasn't it the doctors who told

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Jerry that he needed to be set up for hospice soon and to call his family to say goodbye? It was their medical opinion that he was done. They had tried all the medical options."

When God heals, let's keep our eye on the ball and remember who ultimately does the healing and give Him the credit.

So to you now, I ask, "Do you want to get healed?" What's stopping you from asking for prayer?

Is it self-pity? Is it laziness? It is unbelief? If you don't believe in healing, ask God anyway. The point of the passage is that Kimo the paralytic didn't know Jesus nor believed Jesus would heal him, and he still got healed.

Jesus healed dead people like Lazarus in the Bible who had zero faith. How do I know they had zero faith? Because they were dead! And yet they still got healed. Even if you doubt or feel you don't have enough faith, God can heal you.

And don't miss this: Notice at the end of the passage, Jesus in verse 14, Jesus much later found the guy in the temple. It said:

John 5:14 Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well."

This is profound for three reasons.

First, when Jesus first healed Kimo, He didn't tell him who He was. This wasn't a heal-and-convert-time; just a healing time. I find that interesting. Bathe the guy in love and grace, and then get him healed.

Second, Jesus says, "You have been made well, and now don't sin any more." I don't want you to think that all the time our illness is due to our sin. Sometimes it is. If you choose to take heroin or abuse alcohol that is a form of sinning, so if you get healed today of that, don't be dumb and then go out and shoot up or drink thinking you are now healed and invulnerable. Don't sin so that nothing worse happens to you. But when people get sick it is not always related to sin.

And third, notice this great thing: Jesus sought Kimo out. He found him in the Temple. That is so cool. Jesus as our Lord is always seeking us out. He heard that the religious leaders were giving this former paralytic a lot of heat and hassle so He sought him out to say, "Hey, it was I who did that."

A God who seeks us out is a God who loves us and cares for us. Today is Jesus seeking you out. He brought you here. You didn't know that. He has sought you out and is asking you this morning, "Do you want to get healed?"

You know your illness or issue. God knows it too.. And He wants to know if you would allow yourself to be prayed for healing.

I am going to ask you as a step of faith and openness to come up and receive healing. In a moment I will ask you to either come up to the front of the chancel or to the chairs in both corners to receive prayer from the prayer team which includes our staff and elders.

Unlike our normal Sunday evening healing prayer services, we will be praying for you briefly only so that we can serve more people. This is not a sit-down-and-tell-us-all-of-your-problems. Tell us the one thing we can do for you in prayer.

To be sure not all will be instantly miraculously healed. So don't feel you are inferior if you're not healed. We are dealing with a personal God who has His reasons and His own timing. He is not an ATM that automatically dishes out healings at our beck and call. God will decide who at the pool will be instantly healed.

But I can promise this for all that you will feel cared for and loved. If you want a certain person of a certain gender to pray for you, then please tell the usher when you come forward.

I should add that sometimes it takes more than one prayer. Even with Jesus, He once prayed twice for a blind man to be fully healed. After the first prayer the man said his vision was better but blurry and said that he saw what he thought trees moving. Jesus prayed a second time and the blind man then could see and realized it was people walking. So if you are not healed it may mean you should ask for more prayer.

I also find that often people are healed later, when they are driving home or the next day after the prayer, maybe when they wake up. Don't know why but it happens a lot.

So if you want prayer, then in a moment I am going to ask you to come forward and sit in the front rows of each of the sections, and an usher will guide you to the person who is ready to pray for you.

But right now I am going to do a mass healing prayer for you all where you are seated. As part of our normal healing service, I always pray for everyone first. We find that sometimes God chooses to heal people right then where you are. We have seen people's knees and necks and backs healed. We have seen people's depression lifted. I was once healed of a terrible cough due to a cold, a cough I couldn't stop.

So please join me in prayer right now, and I might mention some things that I think our Lord might want to heal today as I have been told by our prayer team, and if you are not healed in this mass prayer to please come forward for prayer. Let us pray.

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Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. It can also be sent to you by e-mail. Request the free audio version at fpchkoolau@gmail.com.