

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Anyone Have a Yoga Mat"

Based on John 5:1-9

Jesus healed on the Sabbath.
Mistake #1

Jesus went the to the wrong side of the tracks.
Mistake #2

Jesus said, "If you want things to be different, then get up, and get busy!"
Mistake #3

I love Jesus!

Mistake #1

Notice how the author just 'happened' to slip in the bit about healing on the Sabbath after your heart has been warmed by this wonderful story? It makes me wonder, "Had Jesus done this on purpose?" Jesus was a simple carpenter from the country, but He knew the rules. And in the Jewish tradition, there were a lot of rules: about what you could do and what you couldn't do on the Holy Day. And He knew people were watching His every move, through curtains in windows, and over newspapers at the coffee shop. So why did He heal that man, on that day, in front of everyone?

- To break the rules?
- To help when and where help was needed?
- You decide.

THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "GET UP! PICK UP YOUR MAT AND WALK."
JOHN 5:8

Mistake #2

There had to have been many sick people in Jerusalem that festival weekend when Jesus went to visit. He could have gone to any one of their homes, and healed. But oh, no, Jesus went to the part of town that people whispered about, the part of town where children were not allowed to play, the part of town everyone knew about, but no one visited.

There was no place more frightful than this corner of town, other than a leprosy colony perhaps. Because this gate was where the maimed, the crippled and the disabled begged for scraps of food,

soothed their aches and pains in a deep well that no one else would use, where the men and women became faceless, nameless souls cast away from their families, often seen as cursed from God. Our lesson tells us:

"One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years." (v5)

- We never learn his name.
- He'd spent almost his entire life alone, cast away, forgotten.
- But Jesus didn't forget.

Mistake #3

Jesus asked the man, *"Do you want to get well?" (v6)*

It seems a rather obvious question. But then again, maybe not. If the man of our story had been at the well most of his adult life, how long had some of the others been there?

It is insensitive to our hearts today, to even consider, that in the ancient world, anyone born with a physical deformity, a genetic condition, significantly injured in an accident, or succumbed to a disease like polio; anyone too different was cast out from the family, shunned in great

fear. Fear that whatever had happened to them, might be catching. Fear that any mysterious illness was witchcraft, or punishment by God. If you lived much of your life under these circumstances, would you be ready for the question, "Do you want to get well?"

- Was Jesus talking just about the man's legs?
- Who else at the pool heard the same question?
- Why did only one man walk away that day?

My friends, this is a story of many rabbit trails.

It is a story of healing.

Some might label it a miracle.

It is a story of breaking the rules.

Sometimes, Christ calls us to move against the grain.

It is a story of giving voice to the marginalized.

Christ taught us that everyone matters: every man, woman, child, grandparent, ex-husband, difficult neighbor, rebellious teenager, and cranky co-worker.

This is a story of faith.

Yes, but faith with a healthy dose, of "Get up off that couch and get busy!"

The man's legs began to work once more.

But so did the man's heart.

And his mind.

And his courage.

And his desire to live again.

Un-resigned at his fate,

Willing to work at his faith and his future.

Jesus was not just asking the man to believe. Jesus was asking the man to take charge of that belief, that new focus on life, the new opportunities that would now be available to him, with legs that worked and a willing spirit.

"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk. (v8)

And that is the part of faith where many of us: seasoned believers and new pew sitters alike, can stumble and lose our way.

We pray for healing, for signs, for direction, for calm.

- And then we wait.
- We wait for Christ to wash over us.
- We wait for Christ to take charge and show us the way.
- We wait for someone to take us to the pool.

But Jesus says, "Pray to Me, make time for Me...but then get busy for Me.

You're not going to see Me just sitting there in your chair.

You're going to see Me the smile of the lonely neighbor your visit.

You're not going to hear Me, lying in your bed with the covers pulled up.

You're going to hear Me in the whisper of the grass in the garden.

Unfortunately, you may not see too much evidence of Me on the evening news.

But you will see evidence of Me volunteering in the community, helping others with small tasks, or learning about Me at church or in study.

So if you want to get closer to Me...

Pick up your mat and walk. (v8)

Does anyone have a yoga mat I can borrow?
Amen.