

Lent Day 9

Friday February 23, 2018

Reading: John 5:1-24

⁵ One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ 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?”

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.”

Reflection

Doesn't this seem like the craziest question ever posed? Jesus, speaking to a man who had been ill for 38 years and has been coming to the pool to be healed daily, asks “Do you want to get well?” If the question was posed to us we might be tempted to respond, “Well, duh!” But, let's assume Jesus knew what he was doing by asking this question. It would be reasonable to assume that at some level this man didn't want to be healed and others getting to the pool ahead of him and having no one to help him were actually excuses to keep himself ill. We might, with derision say, well who would do that?!

We would. All of us. Think back to things you have been delivered from. In my own case a good example would be smoking. For years I ‘struggled’ with smoking, but now, 16 years of quitting, I can look back and honestly say I didn't actually struggle with quitting, I struggled with smoking while looking like I wanted to quit. In truth I wanted to hold on to my addiction while appearing the victim in the situation. If Jesus had met me he would have been quite right to ask the question, “Do you want to get well?”

This, of course, is part of our human condition. It isn't just the things back there that Jesus has now delivered us from that we were lying about. As I said yesterday, all sin is addictive which is why we keep sinning. This mean we all have sin in our lives TODAY that we are ‘struggling’ with that we are really — at some level — desperately holding on to. The good news of our passage is that Jesus meets us and confronts us with that heart probing question, “Do you want to get well?” He also meets us in the midst of our self deception and takes even our half-hearted yes(ish) and will make us well. Spend time during this lenten season to examine what you might really be holding onto that you look like your wanting to give up. Do you really want to be healed? Then turn to Jesus and ask him.

Prayer

Lord, who made the lame to walk raise us up from our poor condition to walk in the newness of your life. Receive even our half-hearted desires as permission for renovation and confront us with the truth about you and about ourselves. Amen.