

JESUS COMMANDS, "GET UP!"

John 5:1-15

Key Verse: 5:8

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'"

John, in his gospel, deals with specific persons with specific problems so as to lead people to the Son, so that they may believe in him and have eternal life. In the first part of chapter five, Jesus heals a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. The reward for Jesus in healing a pathetic man was persecution. But Jesus did not mind persecution. Still, Jesus is mindful of one invalid man to the end. The invalid man's physical body was healed, but his soul was still very sick. So Jesus visits him to tell him, "Stop sinning." Spiritually sick men are only sinning against God. May God bless us to know that Jesus not only wants to heal us, but he also wants to heal our sinsick souls.

I. "Do you want to get well?" (1-9a)

First, the caricature of the dark world (1-4). Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. One day while he was there, he walked by a pool named Bethesda, located near the Sheep Gate. "Bethesda" means "house of mercy" in Aramaic. A great number of disabled people--blind, lame, paralyzed--were lying around the pool. They were waiting for the moving of the waters. Probably, beneath the pool was a subterranean stream which every now and again bubbled up and disturbed the waters frequently. They believed that the one who got into the pool first when the water was stirred would be healed of whatever disease he had.

This scene, in some ways, is a caricature of human beings in this dark world. All men are competitive, and they are all crippled people. The people were lying there waiting for the time when the water was stirred up, wishing to get into the pool first. Each person was nervous and restless to get into the pool "first" and be healed. No one wanted to concede. Each of them wished that the best fortune would come upon him, not upon others. They were also all crippled people. Each one had his own infirmity and discomfort and handicap. Each one had his own kind of bitterness and sorrow. They were very fatalistic and miserable. One of them may have thought, "I am the most unlucky person since the world was made." Another may have thought, "I am the most miserable person who has ever lived."

In one sense, those who live in this world are like those lying around the pool. Those who do not believe in God are all miserable, and are cripples of all kinds. Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) wrote "Brave New World." The contents of this book are his [predictions](#) that in the 20th century the world would outwardly look like a fantastic new world due to the advancement of technology and materialism, but the people of the world would look like robots. In their material abundance, men do not think. They become like a part of a machine. They are extremely pleasure-seeking. They are proud. They are miserable. What is worse, they become godless, ruthless and totally meaningless. Huxley saw that material abundance would lead men into total depravity. On the contrary, ordinary people thought that they would be happy with

material abundance. Most people believe that they will be happy when they have a nice house in the suburbs with a two-car garage and a swimming pool in the backyard. Then they hope to have 2.5 kids. Many have fulfilled this dream. Were they happy when they achieved the American dream? No. They had to cut the grass in their huge backyards. They had to endure mosquito attacks in the summer time. In the time of abundance, many families broke up. In the time of abundance, many young people became drug abusers and numerous young people committed suicide. At this moment, we remember Jesus' word in Matthew 4:4, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Sometimes, philosophers and men of literature have felt that they should help one another, out of their humanistic sympathy and empathy. Perhaps the blind man carried the lame man piggy-back to the edge of the pool. It was good for them to do so. But when they had to decide who would go into the pool first, there was a dilemma: "Who will go into the pool first, you or I?" Many thinkers expressed the humanistic dilemma in their writings, such as Victor Hugo's, "Les Miserables," and Leo Tolstoy's, "Resurrection." Many people have wanted to do good in the world for others. But each faced the humanistic dilemma and helplessness.

Second, wonderful grace of Jesus. Look at verses 5,6. "One who was there had been an invalid for 38 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?'" This question tells us that Jesus is full of grace and is the God of compassion. This man probably emitted an offensive odor because he could not bathe freely. Inevitably, his skin clung to his bones and he looked haggard due to his malnutrition.

Even in 10 years the world changes. During the last 30 years, history has revolved around in many ways. There had been ideological warfare between communism and democracy. Now it is over. During the last four decades the hippie generation arose and faded away. After that the yuppie generation arose and it is vanishing away. Among yuppie people, the suicide rate has been higher. In the name of freedom, violence and immorality have been largely condoned. These days hedonistic materialism is rampaging in the western countries. This trend makes people mentally ill and antichristian. During the 38 years, the world changed many times, but this invalid man remained the same. Who could dare to ask him anything? But Jesus asked him, "Do you want to get well?" because Jesus is God.

Usually people like those who look lovely, but reject the unlovely. These days people are all selfish and wretched. So people are indifferent to one another. The man who had been an invalid looked wretched. Many were burdened by his existence. But Jesus, out of compassion, asked him, "Do you want to get well?" No one can ask, "Do you want to get well?" to this wretched man. But Jesus did. Jesus is God incarnate. He is full of grace. Jesus asked this filthy man, "Do you want to get well?" This was a divine voice to the wretched person. Jesus is full of grace (Jn 1:14). The grace of Jesus is higher than the mountains and deeper than the ocean. May God grant us his grace so that we may also help filthy people.

Third, Jesus wanted him to have a holy desire. "Do you want to get well?" This question to this invalid man was a difficult question to answer. But Jesus asked him this question, because he is the God of hope. Why did Jesus ask him this question? Jesus asked him this question to see if this man had a holy desire to be healed, for God endowed each person with a holy desire.

There is a serious problem that there are many people who have no desire to be healed, even though they suffer endlessly due to their helplessness. What is worse, most people want to remain as they are, without any desire to be healed. They are the most corrupt people in the world. There is a brilliant student who has the intellectual power of a photographic memory. When he studies, he gets all A's. When he does not study, he gets all F's. Soon he dropped out of college. His problem is that he has no desire to be a brilliant scholar. It is not a light matter. He is a grave sinner because he abuses the noble desire endowed to him by God.

Historically, the desire problem has been a serious problem. When the people of Israel wanted to obtain God's blessing, they were comparatively good. But when they had to maintain God's blessing while living in the promised land, they had no holy desire to maintain God's blessing to be a priestly nation. Soon they forgot God's grace and were utterly corrupt until they were sent into Babylonian Captivity. In light of Israel's history, we should not live according to our sinful nature. We should live up to the holy desires endowed to us by God. According to the Bible, old men must dream, and young men must have a vision (Ac 2:17). Therefore, every man must have a burning fire and master passion in his heart. Most of all, all men must have a holy desire to be right with God.

What was his answer to Jesus' question, "Do you want to get well?" 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 did not answer Jesus' question. Instead he complained about others' selfishness. He also revealed his dependant spirit.

Fourth, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk" (8,9a). The first essential step toward receiving the power of Jesus is to have intensive desire for it. But even though he heard the divine voice, "Do you want to get well?" this man did not appreciate Jesus' grace of caring for him. He was indeed an invalid man. But Jesus did not give up on him. Look at verse 8. Jesus commanded him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." What Jesus said was not advice: It was a divine command. If what he said was advice, his command would have been optional and relative. But it was his divine command. We must obey whether it is possible to obey or not. The power of God is never dispensed when a man is reluctant to be healed. But Jesus commanded, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Jesus has authority to command him to get up because he is God.

God did not make man to lie down on a mat endlessly and open his mouth to complain, or to be bitter about his fatalistic elements. God made men to listen to the divine voice and get up from their fatalistic elements. God does not want us to lie down, but to work hard for the glory of God, as well as for the blessing of this nation. Jesus did not want him to remain a fatalistic person. In reality, the man did not

have desire because of his sin of fatalism. There is fatalism. If there is fatalism, it stems from one's laziness. So Jesus commanded him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." It was a divine command. However, it was an impossible command for him to accept. There were many reasons for him not to obey Jesus' command. Probably he was afraid of losing his beggar's job, which was his life security. Mainly, it was because he was a paralytic both physically and mentally. A young man really wanted to help a boy beggar stay at his house like one of his brothers. But the boy beggar ran away so many times because he liked beggar life more than a normal life. The young man gave up on him because the boy beggar wanted to remain as a beggar.

At Jesus' command the invalid man got up. He got well from his paralysis. Jesus healed the man of his paralysis and gave him a new life. Jesus has the power of healing, especially the power to heal the man's paralysis. Paralysis is comparable to fatalism. One who is sick with paralysis has no strength to shake off the yoke of his own paralysis. Everyone must come to Jesus and hear his command as a matter of life and death, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk," and obey. Jesus wants us to get up, whether we want to or not. Jesus wants us to get up and pick up our mat and walk before God. Like this invalid man, each of us has "just one" fatalistic element of life which makes him paralyzed. When one does not overcome his paralysis, he can be a source of grief to God and to other people. When we want to please God, we must obey his command, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." We must experience that we hear the divine voice and get up.

II. Forgetting God's grace is sin (9b-15)

First, the angry Jews (9b-13). Verses 9b-15 tell us what happened to this man after he was healed by Jesus. This was an occasion of universal joy and thanksgiving for the Jews, because God had come down and healed a useless man to be useful. But the Jews were unhappy because they were jealous of Jesus' healing power. They were paralyzed by their jealousy.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews threatened the man who had been healed, charging him that he worked on the Sabbath by carrying his mat on a Sabbath, and thus broke the Sabbath law. The man who had been healed was scared by the Jews' intimidation and dumped all the blame on Jesus, saying, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" It was the time for him to testify, "I was an invalid man for 38 years, but Jesus of Nazareth healed me!" (11) The man forgot all the grace Jesus had given him. To obtain a championship of any kind is not so difficult, but to maintain a championship is much harder. Likewise, obtaining God's grace is easier. But maintaining God's grace is indeed harder. The man was healed physically, but he was still a spiritual paralytic. The Jews knew that this man was scared like a dog before a tiger, so they intimidated him until he betrayed Jesus by saying, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" The man did not remember Jesus' grace. Thus he betrayed the wonderful grace of Jesus. But the Jews did not catch Jesus, because the man had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there (13).

Second, Jesus visited the man to heal his spiritual sickness (14-15). What did Jesus do for this poor fellow? Look at verse 14. "Later Jesus

found him at the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well again. Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.'" It meant, "You are well again from your paralysis by God's grace. So you must remember God's grace and thank him always for his healing." When Jesus said "Stop sinning," it meant, "Not remembering God's grace is grave sinning against God." According to Romans 1:21, unthankfulness is the root of sin. This man had to thank God for healing him of his infirmity. But he was not thankful. Jesus really wanted to heal him of the sin-sickness of his unthankfulness. So Jesus commanded him, "Stop sinning." A sinful man doesn't remember God's grace which he received through 10,000 incidents, but only remembers one thing which made him feel hurt. How wretched a fallen man is! On the other hand, there are many people who have been thankful to God. In Greek, the word "thank" is "eucharistia" (eucharistia)." This word stemmed from "charis" (charis)," which means "grace." "Joy" in Greek is "chara" (chara)," which also stemmed from "charis" (charis)." When we thank God by remembering his grace, we can be joyful: at the same time, the heavenly sunshine smears into our hearts. A thankful heart to God fills us with joy overflowing. Once St. Paul and Silas were put in prison after being beaten much. Were they groaning over their wounds? No. They were singing, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, thank you our Lord Jesus Christ." They could sing because they were full of God's grace in their hearts. There is a young man who is as pure as little kids. His joy of life is to hug and play with little children. He wanted to have as many children as the mother of John Wesley. But his wife had to remove her womb entirely. He was sorry for a little while. Soon the young man became very joyful after making a decision before God to accept all American young people as his own children. His happiness and joy are well expressed on his face. His joy is well verified by his harder labor than before. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Thanking God is the will of God for all mankind.

Today we learn from John chapter 5 that we must have a holy desire. Otherwise we become a slave of sinful desires. We also learn that we must hear the divine voice of Jesus: "Do you want to get well?" "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."