

## Do You Want To Be Made Well?

On Sunday, we explored the story of the healing of a lame man, and its implications for us and the places in our lives that need to be healed.

1. Warm up question: Pastor Melody shared a story about a time when, as a kid, she got really scared. In her case, she thought the rapture came and she got left behind. What was one of your most frightening moments as a child?
2. Read John 5:1-9. Here we're told that the lame man had been ill for 38 years, sitting on his mat at the pool of Beth-zatha, waiting for the water to stir, hoping to be the first in the water to receive a miracle of healing.
  - a. After 38 years of illness, what might have been this man's state of mind? How can long-term illness – or long-term challenges of any kind – affect our state of mind?
  - b. What does the man's mat represent in this story? What are the possibilities?
  - c. Jesus asks the man, "Do you want to be made well?" What do you think Jesus meant by this question? What point was Jesus trying to make?
  - d. What do you make of the man's response to Jesus' question? As you see it, what's the psychological subtext that underlies the man's response?
3. Pastor Melody said, "I wonder if [the man in our Gospel story] had become so identified with his mat that he forgot where he ended and the story began. You see, 'mat stories' are limiting stories. We can repeat them for so long that we actually become them." We all do it at one time or another. Have you ever known someone who seemed to be trapped in a "story of limitation" that didn't have to be? How was that person affected by his or her "mat story"?
4. Imagine a great many sick people sitting around the pool of Beth-zatha when suddenly the water began to stir. Try to picture the scene in your mind's eye, as everyone scrambles to be first in the water.
  - a. What kind of mentality do you think that created among those who sat around the pool? How do you suppose they saw each other?
  - b. Do you think God would dole out miracles that way – based on who got in the water fastest?
  - c. Melody said, "What if God's purpose for being in the porticos wasn't actually about getting into the pool at all? What if it was meant to be a place where a community gathered to help each other find healing . . . , where people could have

been creating their own miracles?” Do you think prayers for miracles may sometimes become ways of avoiding doing what we need to do for ourselves?

5. Melody’s point on Sunday was not that every physical illness can be miraculously cured. Sometimes there are things that are legitimately beyond our ability to change. “But,” Melody said, “it doesn’t feel like that’s what was happening with the sick guy in John 5. It feels like he just got stuck and believed that all he was capable of doing was sitting on his mat.” In other words, the man seems to have gotten stuck in his own “story of limitation.” Sometimes we may get stuck in unwarranted stories of physical limitation. But even more often we can get stuck in stories of psychological or emotional limitation. In that context, Melody challenged us to beware of “scarcity thinking.” She said, “The notion that miracles of God have some type of limited access are false narratives that do nothing but keep us on our mats. There is more than enough good and healing and wholeness to go around.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. How do we know the difference between limitations that are genuinely beyond our ability to change versus limitations that we should defiantly rise up against in prayer and action?
7. In his book “The Four Agreements,” Don Miguel Ruiz challenges us to see ourselves as “warriors” who do battle against the parasites that invade our minds and express themselves in the form of fear. He suggests three ways to defeat these parasites:
  - Be honest about our fears and refuse to give them power or voice.
  - Replace fear-based ideas with love-based ideas.
  - Approach every day as if it is our last – and act accordingly.
  - a. Give an example of what it would look like to replace a fear-based idea with a love-based idea.
  - b. Which of Ruiz’ three core ideas most appeals to you?
8. Rev. Nadia Bolz Weber tells about a time when, as a young mother, she started getting sick a lot and was exhausted all the time. Nadia started to think that something was seriously wrong, and found a certain comfort in the thought of being hospitalized as a way of taking a break from her stressful life. After several trips to the doctor, the doctor told her, “Nadia, there’s nothing wrong with you. You just have to deal with your life.” For Nadia, that was the kick in the pants she needed to stop investing herself in her illness narrative. What do you make of that story? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?
9. Let’s apply what we’ve discussed to ourselves. Is there a “story of limitation” you’ve been telling yourself that you feel you need to confront like a spiritual warrior? If so, what’s the story – and what might it look like for you to “stand up and walk?”