*Village*

*June 1-2, 2013*

*John 5:1-8*

This time of year we hear snippets of various commencement addresses

-Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Board chairman, recently addressed the students at Bard College, giving this challenge:

*“During your working lives, you will have to reinvent yourselves many times. Success and satisfaction will not come from mastering a fixed body of knowledge but from constant adaptation and creativity in a rapidly changing world."*

In a hyper culture—you will have to change

-but some refuse to reinvent, refashion--CHANGE

-such as a man Jesus met in Jerusalem-*read 5:1-6*

-as Jesus was prone to do—He went to where there was need

-a place where the down and out congregated—the weak, the blind, the lame—the withered

-where medicines and Obamacare were non-existent

-a place filled with religious and pagan

-where some bought in to the myth that healing happened when the water stirred

-a ritual that seemed to actually reward the healthiest—those that had the advantage of strength and movement-“someone with a malady as serious as chapped lips or hangnail”[[1]](#endnote-1)

Jesus saw them all—their maladies, their stories, their hopelessness—their confinement to a small world in which reinventing was all but impossible

-and singled out one helpless man in the crowd

-why this man? We’re not told

-the reason lies within God—whose grace goes against claim and calculation[[2]](#endnote-2)

-so how do you start a conversation with a man paralyzed for as many years as Israel wandered in the wilderness?

*-“How are you--how’s your day going?”*

*-“Do you come here often?”*

-actually—we would expect Jesus to ask*—“Do you have the faith to be healed?”*

-but instead He asked--*“Do you want to be healed—become whole?”*

 -which seems strange on the surface!

 -if all you have ever experienced is a painful past and a disappointing present and a hopeless tomorrow

 -a life of bedsores and issues with personal hygiene, insensitive people cutting in line

 -exclusion from society, from worship, from community, from relationships

 -never able to work, travel, make love, cook, care for kids, chase after dreams, participate in sports—would a desire to be healed be even a question???!!!!

illus-when I was in ER and a lot of pain two weeks ago—I would have considered it rather bizarre if the doctor came in and asked—do you want to be healed?

-no- I just want hang out in ER-it is such a rush

-plus—this is an ultimate hall pass—no staff meeting, put out the garbage--no-heal me now!!!!

-but Jesus asked this question—and apparently it was too difficult for this man to answer—*read vs 7*

-instead of a simple yes—he was bent on complaining

-the pushy people, the paralysis

-do I want to be healed? Have you noticed—the rule here is “every man for himself”

-and there are no lifeguards on duty

-I have no one to help—healing is just not possible for me

-but then—it happened-*read vs 8-9a*

-in an instant-through the sheer force of grace--Jesus removed every excuse this man could come up with

-years of limitation vanished—muscles, nerves, joints exploded into life

-a skeletal frame was suddenly made firm, atrophy stopped

-the nearby crowd must have suddenly become dumbfounded

-he could now do so many things that a moment ago he could only imagine

-but John wants us to know that something was not right

-it all happened at the worst time-*read vs 9b*

-the words are intended to create intrigue, dissonance

-in music, it would be like a powerful discord

-a wonderful story has just ruined

-Jesus told this man to break a Sabbath law—“pick up your bedroll”

-which was a major violation

-m. Sabb. 7.2 of the religious code forbade the carrying of any goods on the Sabbath (one of the 39 classifications of work)

-these were regulations that expanded the law—“If anyone works on the Sabbath, that person must be cut off from the people and put to death”-Ex 32:14

-this was not a misdemeanor—this was a class 1 felony

-and so—this man was pulled over by the religious police and arrested-*read vss 10-13*

-rigid, legalistic, doctrinaire, uncaring, blind-they could not see the miracle before them

-all they could see was illegal activity

-they were not interested in who healed the man—they wanted to know who told him to pick up his mat

-nor were they interested in the intent of the Sabbath—that one find rest—relief from one’s burdens

-Jesus had just unburdened this man—but these religious men were not impressed

-they were legalists—and it is what legalists do—reduce life to mere technicalities, [[3]](#endnote-3) turn righteousness acts into cruel instruments of oppression[[4]](#endnote-4)

-meanwhile--Jesus had disappeared—just as He sometimes does in our lives

-to test us—how we will handle wellness, opportunity, second chances

-hence--the conversation was not over

-there was unfinished business—unfinished healing-*read vs 14*

-Jesus pointed out two things—one obvious and one not so obvious--

*1-you are a well man physically*

-look at yourself--you have been made whole

-something profound has happened—your life has turned upside down—grace has been extended in a powerful way

-you now have an appetite, energy, circulation

-you can see from a height higher than ground level

-you no longer have to be a dependent

-but this does not mean everything is okay

2-you are not a well man spiritually

-there is a deeper sickness—a more severe paralysis at work in you

-evident in how you are handling things

-there is sin in your life—that is every bit as crippling as the disease that wrecked your body

-and this is a healing *you* must address—you have to own

-there are issues you must confront, get serious about

-the tense implies a certain urgency—stop doing it now!!

-for if you don’t—there will be consequences

-maybe it was a disordered heart—leading to self-centeredness

-maybe he was stuck in the mode of self-preservation that made everyone else secondary—their needs invisible--inconsequential

-maybe a tendency to prefer the life of a victim-live a life of sympathy and attention

-be served rather than serve others

-maybe it was a preference to avoid responsibility—refuse to reinvent

-maybe he was back begging—relying on what people could give to him

-back playing the victim-“I was healed against my will—Jesus violated my space”

-Michael Card puts it well*—“He clings to his disability like a lifesaver because it saves him from life itself”*

-maybe it was his faithlessness-for have you noticed?

 -faith seems to have played no role—healing was neither a response to faith nor a stimulus to faith

-nor was there any hint of gratitude—a sense of profound obligation—send me!

-nor any desire to know more about Jesus

-but I think it was deeper—here was a man who was missing the opportunity to step into the life God saved him for

-this was a flat man—a man who did not really want to be reinvented

-obtuse, a dullard, a drudge, a drone, a taker, a user

-a man only out for himself—as the next verse affirms-*read vs 15*

-instead of throwing down his bedroll and following Jesus

-he threw Jesus under the bus

-aligned himself with the rule keepers rather than the Ruler of the universe

-missed the second half of life God had for him

CONC

I find this conversation to be one of the most irritating—maybe because I find this man so distasteful, so maddening

-he’s right down there with Ahab and Amnon and Ananias and other unlikable persons in Scripture

-maybe because I have seen too many who live like him…see the same tendencies in my heart

-occasionally Jesus enters our small, broken world and asks the same question—DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?

-do you want to change—reinvent, repristinate, be transformed?

-and in too many instances—we really don’t

-we leave church the same exact way we came

-leave our devotions with the same heart condition

a-maybe we prefer to HANG ON TO OUR BROKENNESS

-prefer to be alone rather than experience the healing grace of relationships

-prefer the benefits, the sympathy and attention that come when one has been dealt a bad hand

-in some strange way—sickness can become the sick person’s haven

 b-some people prefer HEALING ON THEIR TERMS

 -for God’s healing is not always easy—it’s even dangerous, costly—as it was for this man

 -sometimes healing paradoxically involves pain

 -it means entering the world of responsibility, giving rather than merely receiving

 -shaking things up

-many prefer to stay in their comfort zones

-accept a life of mediocrity—missed opportunities—status quo-passivity--a life of existence

-living as if the heavens are closed—the abundant life is a myth

-repairing nets rather than throwing them in the deep

-Jesus is asking all of us right now—do you want live differently?

-position yourself to see God work in an undeniable way?

-live a life of extreme fruitfulness?

-here’s what’s required—

*1-A deep desire to want to be healed*

-to see past the impossibilities

-be healed of passivity, indifference, self ctrdness, faithlessness

*2-A boldness to ask for it*

 -a willingness to dive off the deep end

 -step up and ask God to make you what He designed you to be

 -ask God to reinvent you

 -ask for a challenge bigger than yourself—that can make a difference—that will require the best you have to give—and the enabling power of God

*3-A willingness to live out what wellness requires*

 -we might become dangerous—even offensive to the system—at least to the legalistic ones

1. Craddock, 43 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Craddock, 44 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Buchanan, Rest, 107 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Peterson, Christ Plays, 111 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)