

“Being Made Well”

John 5:2-9b, Revelation 21:10 & 21:22-22:5

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Jesus asks. "Do you want to be made well?"

Abigail's joy, passion and success in climbing has inspired me to climb. I have been surprised by the many spiritual truths that climbing reveals. It is a sport where everyone works together to help each person and cheer for each person to do their very best. Each person has different skills, flexibility and body type so there are several different ways to complete routes. A good climber knows themselves and how to utilizing their strengths. Rest is essential. Climb in a flurry and you will quickly become flash pumped, your forearms will tighten, your fingers go numb and you lose almost all your strength. Rest, rhythm, Sabbath are all essential to climbing. A great climber views every fall as a lesson, a learning experience. You have learned one way not to climb the route. You have learned more about yourself and your abilities.

Only 2 out of every 10 falls are due to a physical limitation. 80% of fails come from doubt, fear and poor choices. Many people never leave the ground because they are afraid. Great climbers have exceptional trust. They trust the crash pad, rope, protection equipment and belayer to give them a soft, safe landing if they fall. Sometimes, when I first started climbing, doubts about the safety equipment would enter my mind, and a fall soon followed. Some people get so intense they forget to breathe. They soon fall. Great climbers are as calm and comfortable hanging by the most precarious grip as standing on the ground because they trust in the gear and belayer to always keep them safe. I made a huge jump in my ability to climb difficult routes when my trust grew. Now when I get to a difficult spot on the route, a spot that requires me to propel my body upward trusting my hand to make contact with the hold in the right spot, grip the hold and support me, I boldly and confidently take that leap of faith because I know that the worst that can help is a catch by my belayer giving me an endless amount of chances to try it again. God's grace catches us. God's grace makes every moment a fresh start to try again. Trust in the belayer gives you an opportunity to try all sorts of moves, trust to be bold in trying a move way beyond your ability, trust to try things you normally would never even attempt, trust to keep trying until you reach new heights. If you want to climb high you need trust that inspires you to try bold moves.

If we trust in God we can reach new heights in life. There is no reason to fear for Jesus will make us and all of creation well. Revelation gives us a glimpse of heaven that awaits us. **Revelation 21:10 & 21:22-22:5** “**And in the spirit the angel carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord**

God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and God's servants will worship God; they will see God's face, and God's name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."

All glory, love and joy that you experience on earth will be in heaven. Nothing unclean, no mistakes, no missed opportunities, no pains or regrets will be in heaven. We will all enjoy endless light, wholeness and glory for eternity.

Jesus is our belayer. No matter what happens on earth Jesus will catch us and carry us to glorious eternal life. Since we have Jesus, a belayer who never fails, there is no need to live a dull life with both feet on the ground. We are encouraged to take leaps of faith. God commands us to take risks, to live life abundantly, to love extravagantly, to rejoice passionately.

When I lived in Ohio, numerous times my Spiritual Director would ask me, "What is the worst that can happen?" Depending on my response she would then say, "And God will redeem that, forgive that, heal that." Often she would ask, "Do you believe that you will spend eternity in heaven?" My answer was always, "yes". Her reply was, "then don't be so timid go and live life to the fullest."

God our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer over and over again in every way imaginable since the beginning of time keeps assuring us that all will be resurrected for eternity. God keeps inviting us to bring some of heaven to earth today by our trust in God, by love, by doing that which brings joy.

Sometimes a person gets overwhelmed by health problems, loss, suffering or pain. Sometimes a person gets negative, quick to criticize, seldom complimenting. Sometimes a person dwells on all their needs, rather than being grateful for all their blessings. Sometimes a person focuses so much on what is wrong with the world that they lose their vision for all the beauty, joy, love and grandeur in the world. Sometimes a person is so hurt by loving that they lose trust loving small and timid. Sometimes a person fails to trust their safety rope, eternity in heaven, so they hunker down and wallow in despair.

Jesus, always full of compassion, is always with us, nudging us, encouraging us, invigorating us to live life abundantly, to love, to hold nothing back, for no matter what we will enjoy heaven. Jesus asks. "Do you want to be made well?" The gospel of John explains. **John 5:2-9b** "Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids--blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, Jesus said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk."

This miracle gives us a foretaste of the healing power of heaven. No matter how desperate the situation God will make us whole. God created a good world. We have messed it up. God will clean everything up. God will resurrect all and everyone into glorious eternal life.

The man was paralyzed. Likely we are talking about physical paralysis in this case, however the word used could mean paralysis from fear, depression, despair, destructive behavior, broken relationships or being stuck. There were many options available to this man. With a little trust he could have taken some risks finding ways to serve despite his limitations, finding joy in his serving. He could have loved boldly then he likely would have some friends and family surrounding and uplifting him. He could have nourished his relationship with God finding the peace that Jesus gives in the midst of struggle and suffering. Instead this man chose to surround himself with other "paralyzed" people, a group of negative people, self-fulfilling a downward spiraling miserable earthly life.

Last week I watched a documentary on happiness. Research reveals one's circumstances, such as wealth, health, and ability, counts for a mere 10% of one's happiness. The "paralyzed" man let the 10% destroy his life to the point where all he did was sit around and complain to others about how bad everything had become.

Jesus asks. "Do you want to be made well?" One would think a quick yes would be the answer, however this person spent so much time lamenting they justify their timid, dreary existence. They make excuses, sir no one is helping me, sir someone else always gets a lucking break and gets to the healing pool first, sir this, sir that. This person is so "paralyzed" they no longer recognize the compassionate healing, resurrecting, loving movement of God in their life. They are so paralyzed that when God ask, "do you want to be made well?" There is no trust, only excuses, rationalization, justification as to why they should be miserable.

Jesus asks. "Do you want to be made well?" A person can become so overwhelmed by their paralysis, their weakness, that they no longer trust any of their strengths. Over time one can become so familiar with their paralysis that they in essence answer, "no I do

not want to be made well". I will not trust that God can do wonderful things through me today with my weakness. One day we will all be in heaven and enjoy eternity with only strengthens. On earth all of us have weaknesses, yet all of us can still do wonderful things, if we trust in God and take leaps of faith. I cannot recall a single person in the Bible who did not have major weaknesses and horrible circumstances, yet all of them, who trusted God, did marvelous things. Everywhere you look deeply, you will find God working in everyone's life. Anyone who is loving, joyful, peaceful, gracious or doing the miraculous, has trust in God. They keep trying again and again despite their weakness, always trusting that God will give them another chance, trusting that they will find a way to be a blessing.

God is grace. Even when there is no faith, no trust, no desire left to become well, no worship, no faith at all. Jesus heals the person. The man takes up his mat and walks. Still there is no worship, no gratitude, no evidence of any trust or faith not even a simply 'thanks' instead the man walks away. Jesus knew this man. Jesus knew how he would react and still Jesus healed him. Grace is the free gift of God's resurrecting love. As soon as we put any requirements, limitations or any human thoughts, feelings, actions or response regarding grace, it is no longer grace, it is no longer free.

Pastor Scott Cowdell said. "The paralyzed man is you, the paralyzed man is me; he's all of humanity struggling wearily towards the light, though perhaps he's grown so accustomed to his rut in life that there's not much struggle left in him. Like so many before and since he waits for a lucky break, in his case for a healing in stirred up water, and for someone to put him into it, but it never comes off. This paralyzed man is everyone who lives resigned to a disappointing job, or to no job at all. This paralyzed man is everyone who stoically goes through the motions of a disappointing marriage, or tries to keep hope alive in the face of actual debilitating illness. This paralyzed man is everyone who yearns to be thin but finds that dieting makes you fatter in the long run, and everyone who tries and tries to be attractive and popular but isn't ever able to connect. This paralyzed man is everyone who struggles."

Jesus does not promise an easy life. Jesus does not promise to heal us here on earth. Jesus came to earth to experience our pain, struggle and suffering so God can relate to us. Jesus told the disciples, life will be hard, full of hardships, loss and suffering, yet trust God. If one trusts God and risks love they may be loved back, they may discover new loves. If one trusts God and risks bold moves they may discover abundant life. If one trusts God striving after their dreams they may be filled with joy. If one trusts God giving lavishly they may be filled with a peace beyond all understanding. Or one can play it safe, hunkering down beside a pool, surrounding themselves with negative people, becoming more and more dismal. Either way the end result is the same, by God's grace, enjoying the glory of heaven. However since Jesus is your belayer, muster up a little trust, take leaps of faith, climb to new heights, bring some of heaven to earth today. Tell God you want to be made well today. Amen