

**Preacher:** Pastor Twyla

**Scripture:** John 5:1-9

There is an old adage ... that you may still hear at times even today: ... Strike while the Iron is hot!

The saying is basically telling us .... that when the time is right... you should act... you should seize the moment ... or you will miss out ... on your opportunity.

The adage is taken from a blacksmith ... working a piece of iron ... into shape.

That piece of iron ... must be struck with a hammer ...while the iron ... is red-hot.

If you wait too long, .... the iron will cool .... and you will be unable ... to seize the moment ... to shape the metal.

So, ... when those moments arrive in our lives ... we must strike ... while the iron is hot.

We must seize the moment ... and strike.

Pastor Jeffrey Smead was at dinner one night with his parents ... and an elderly couple, the Carr's, .... came over to the table.

As they approached his younger brother and he immediately stood up, ... their mother had taught them well ... over the years.

Now Heidi Carr ... who never had a problem speaking her mind ... sternly grabbed Jeff's arm ... as she approached the table.

She said .... "Jeff ... I hear your dating one of the Gartman girls."

"Yes," he replied ... "Lee and I have been dating for some time."

Well ... Do you like her ... "Yes, I replied I like her a lot," he answered.

She pulled Jeff's face closer to hers ... "Now Jeff you listen to me" .... "Strike while the Iron is hot."

Strike while the iron is hot is something that one might want to say to the man in today's bible story that was read to us today. The story takes place by a pool too...a special pool in Jerusalem. This pool was special because the people believed it had healing power. There was an old superstition they believed that occasionally an angel came to stir the waters in the pool, leaving it with healing powers...but only for the first person who got into the pool after the waters were stirred up. Sick and handicapped people came to the pool every day...or stayed by the pool for many days...with hope that they could be the first one to get into the pool after the water began to stir.

Some translations of the Bible do not include information about this superstition. In those translations...as in the one that was read for you today, the New Revised Standard Version...you will not find a verse four. Verse three is followed by verse five. It is believed that John did not want to give any credence to this myth and so he did not include it. Many theologians believe that the information about an angel stirring the water was added later and included in only some translations.

On this particular day when Jesus came to town for one of the three annual special festivals, which Jewish men were required to attend, there was a sick man by the pool who apparently had been going to the pool for thirty-eight years. That's a long time. Of course, he was not the only person by the pool wanting to be healed of a disease, wound, or handicap; but for some reason, Jesus chose to talk to and eventually heal this particular man.

We might wonder why Jesus choose this particular man out of everyone else who was by the pool? The New International Version of the bible offers a logical answer in its' translation by saying in verse six that "Jesus learned," about the man's condition. However, biblical translators

say this is an incorrect translation from the original Greek text. Translating the original Greek text, using the word learned, we are led to believe that someone told Jesus about the man's condition.

The correct translation from the Greek is "Jesus knew," (which is the translation you heard this morning)...about the man's condition...no one needed to tell Jesus about him...he just knew, like he knew everything about the Samaritan woman by the well. You remember her, don't you? Jesus told her about events and details of her life that there was no way he should have known about; like the fact that she had five husbands and the man she was with when Jesus met her was not her husband. In today's story, Jesus did not learn about the man's condition...he already knew about his condition.

So...here we have Jesus picking out this man by the pool to ask him if he wants to get well. Unlike what usually happens, this man did not ask Jesus to heal him. In fact, he didn't seem to even know who Jesus was.

"Do you want to get well?" Jesus asked the ailing man. It sounds like a simple question...but really it is not. There are layers of things to consider when asked this question. Jesus might as well have asked him if he wanted to change; because, if the man said, "yes," that he wanted to be healed, his life was definitely going to change.

His way of life...going to the pool and begging for money so he could survive...was going to end. He would be expected to find work...a trade to support himself. Things that other people did for him; he was now going to be expected to do for himself. That's a huge change in his way of living after thirty-eight years of being brought to the pool and sitting by it. Did he want to make that change? Did he really want his life to become different or was he comfortable with it just the way it was?

This concept might trigger something in your own thinking about a very real problem society and organizations deal with today. A common discussion I hear people having...is the concern that there are some people... unfortunately who are born into or who fall onto hard times...who do not want to make positive changes that would make their lives more productive and self-sufficient...people who have become accustomed to what we call, "using" the system...government programs, church benevolences, the kindness and generosity of people...and don't want to find the help they need or a job to support themselves and their families. We see how their abuse of the system makes it even more difficult for those who really do need the help.

This is, indeed, a serious and troubling issue. As people called by God to serve those in need, we want to help. However, we sadly admit, we don't always know the difference between who sincerely needs help and who is using the system. I don't have an easy answer for you. I struggle with the challenge as you do.

However, **turning our attention from this one specific issue**, where choosing to make a change can certainly make a difference, we must acknowledge there are other decisions we make that affect change in our lives. Change can make our lives difficult or uncomfortable...at least for a while, which is maybe why key decisions that would initiate change get put on hold or are avoided all together.

For example, there's the change that occurs in one's life when he or she says yes to Jesus. When someone gives their life to Jesus...they become a new person. They let go of their old sinful ways...and walk in newness of life as they seek to follow Jesus' example of obedience to God. Baptism symbolizes the change that happens to us when we give ourselves to Jesus. It

symbolizes the washing away of the old and rising to new life. For some people that requires a huge change. It is a choice. Jesus stands before the lost and asks, "Do you want to get well?"

Praise God for those who say yes to wanting, "to get well." There are a whole lot of people...some you may know...who keep making excuses for not letting Jesus into their lives. At the heart of making a decision for Christ may be that they just don't want the changes a commitment to Jesus would require in their lives.

Here's something else interesting to note in the story. Did you happen to notice that the sick man in the story never really said yes to Jesus? Instead, he tried to explain to Jesus that he continued to be sick for all of those years because he could not get into the pool fast enough to be the one who would get healed...and he said he had no one to help him. For thirty-eight years...he could not find someone to help him? Or was this simply an excuse for really not wanting to get well?

A farmer asked his neighbor one day if he might borrow a rope.

"Sorry," said the neighbor. "I'm using my rope to tie up my milk."

"Rope can't tie up milk."

"I know," replied the neighbor, "but when a man doesn't want to do something, one reason is as good as another."

It's easy to get frustrated with these kinds of people. We all know those who answer every suggestion or even, every obvious solution requiring change with "but"...something. It's just too easy to make excuses...including excuses that sound good...to get out of doing something. It doesn't seem to matter for some people, even when they know the outcome of doing something different will make their life better. They've become too complacent and comfortable with the disfunction or negativity in their lives. Getting past the "buts" that hold people back from making change in their lives can be a very, very difficult hurdle to overcome.

Which leads us into another point I want to make this morning. Remember that Jesus told the man by the pool to "pick up his mat and walk." Like this man, if we really do need and or want to change something in our lives, then we need to take some action. We need to not only make some decisions; but also, make some movements towards what is real...towards truth...towards our Savior.

The man that Jesus helped was not going to get well by simply laying aside the pool...nor was he going to get well if he was counting on a myth about the water being a healing pool at certain times. He was healed when he listened to Jesus' command to pick up his mat and walk.

Also, by telling the sick man "to take up his mat" the Lord was telling him and he tells all who truly want to change, something very important; don't turn around and look back...do not let doors open and then go back to the way things were. Many people fail right here.

Furthermore, according to verse fourteen, which we did not read this morning, when Jesus found this man in the temple later, he said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." A literal translation of the Greek is "don't keep on sinning. Don't take for granted this healing you've received...live into the change that has begun in your life."

Have you heard about the Australian aborigine who got a new boomerang, and then spent the rest of his life trying to throw away his old one? Besides conjuring up a humorous picture of this man and his dilemma, the constantly returning boomerang image also speaks to a familiar problem. How many of us have spiritual boomerangs which keep returning, intruding, on our lives? We fail to terminate bad relationships, and so replay patterns of dependence or self-

*May 25, 2025 - "Jesus asked, 'Do you want to get well?'"*

absorption. We return again to harmful habits, hurting ourselves or ones we love. We rely on old reactions in the face of new circumstances, refusing to grow spiritually or emotionally.

It is easy to get frustrated and angry with ourselves when we get caught in a boomerang cycle with our hurts, habits, wants and the like. We might ask ourselves over and over, "Why...why am I stuck?" Could it be that we really haven't been willing to change? It takes courage and honesty to examine that possibility and answer it truthfully. Admittedly, some life circumstances are not easily changed. And there are illnesses that cures have not been found. However, when Jesus asks if one wants to be well with these challenges, trusting him helps people to remain open to physical or spiritual possibilities, patience, endurance, inner peace...that he can provide. Being well, might simply mean...seeing and feeling God's presence, comfort, and power with you in those circumstances.

If Jesus asks us, "Do you want to get well?" we must decide if we want to be changed? we must decide to stop making excuses, we must decide whether we are ready to act...to "hit the iron while it's hot."

You don't need to be afraid. You can jump in the pool...not the pool of fantasy and lies...but the pool of our baptism...the pool of God's love...where the old will be washed away and the change in us will rise. Amen.