Sunday 23rd July 2017 Message

How do you live whilst waiting for your miracle?

Passage

***John 5:1-15 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"***

***The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"***

***Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."***

***The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.***

**Underlying mystery** Slide

Bethesda – House of Mercy – the church should be the House of Mercy not judgement and self seeking.

Sheep Gate – the place the sheep came into Jeruselam into the House of Mercy

Sheep Gate – the gate named by Nehemiah but built by the high priestly family of

Eliashib – God of conversion ***Neh 3:1***

Five porches - five = gracious provision

Five fold ministry apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, teachers ***Eph 4:11***

Porches – protection from the elements, covering

*The Lamb of God – enters by the High Priest Gate*

*To minister mercy and abundant grace to one sheep who was waiting for his miracle.*

We are going to come back to this account of the lame mans healing. I wonder which chair he was sitting in as he waited for his miracle. With regret of the past that made him lame? With shame that in the present he could not even get into the water? With fear that God would never turn up and his future had no prospects?

**Waiting for my church miracle.**

**The Vines Future - Gods designs for communities of believers**

When I became part of the leadership of The Vine, some 12 years ago I think it was, I was stirred and envisioned by a Bible verse that mentions the name Elim of which I had never heard of until I arrived in an Elim church.

This is the verse.

***Ex 15:27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water. NIV***

I began to wonder at the significance of the numbers in the passage and their similarities to numbers elsewhere in the Bible, and I began to dream of church that had the same time of leadership structure as Moses and Jesus, that led the communities around them to have encounters with God as they journeyed with God.

Consider this.

Moses was supported by Aaron & Miriam, he had 12 tribes to lead with a head spokesperson for each tribe, and he appointed 70 elders to assist in the work.

Jesus had three close friends Peter, James and John of the 12 disciples he trained, but he also appointed 72 others to go out in ministry.

It has always been on my heart to see this church established with a similar structure inclusive of the five fold ministry gifts within the core eldership.

I have dreamt of this church being a minimum of 6 cell groups of 12 people (72) fully equipped and able to lead this community in which God has placed us, to an encounter with Jesus.

This is the future that I believe I had a God inspired dream of this church being like. I have no desire to be prescriptive about numbers or patterns and the limits that they could impose on how the church develops, but I do see this as a minimum which enthuses me to press on into Gods plan for this area.

However, Gods word has not yet been fulfilled and for now I have to live in the present and work day by day under His leading to deal with the present so that the future can become a reality.

There have been people come and go, some painful departures, and some mistakes made along the way. I could choose to sit in the chair of regret or shame, and on occasions I have found myself there, in recent months probably more frequently than I would like to admit. But I am as determined as ever not to let the past rob me of the present or the future. I have to, we have to live in the present fully believing Gods word will be fulfilled.

***Phil 3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. NIV***

**Waiting for my healing miracle.**

As you will all know I had to wait sixty years for my foot to be healed. So I have a little understanding of what the lame man went through.

You wait and see other people get healed and get frustrated and disheartened. You wait and get no help into the place of receiving your healing and you become embittered and resentful on occasions. You wait and imagine old age even more crippled, helpless and destitute.

I have sat in the chair of regret for my jealousy when my brother was born, which resulted in a reversal of the progress that had been made in straightening my club feet. I have sat in the chair of rejection when my parents could not cope with the pain I was in. I have sat in the chair of shame as people had to care for me, carry me, and take me to places.

When I met Jesus I knew that He could heal me and my future could be very different, but there were still times when I was not fully present in His presence, or present in anybody else’s presence as I struggled mentally to accept that my future was not yet.

Sometimes I even thought like Mephibosheth who was lame in both feet from the age of five ***2 Sam 9:8 Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" NIV*** to whom king David said “He will always be at my table.” I have been welcome to feast with the King, to be in His presence, and marvelled at His provision and acceptance.

At times I have not been present because I feared a future with no relief from pain and limitations. Such fear is a deadly denial of the word of God that the enemy sows into our minds to make us abort our own destiny.

Yet God has been merciful, and I am still learning to live in the present, when it looks and feels like Gods promise for the future is so far off.

**Gen 22:44 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.** NKJV

**The lame man**

We find our lame man amongst a hoard of people with varying disease, blind, lam e and paralyzed. All of them would need help to get to the pool at the time the angels stirred the water.

Every person whether physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually sick needs assistance and/or encouragement to come into the presence of Jesus. Whatever, state people who have a deficiency in any area of their life need to “want to be made will” and positioned in the present in the Presence of the healer.

The problem for so many is they are physically present but mentally and emotionally elsewhere.

This man knew he had nobody to help him get into the waters, and that he could not make it there himself.

He, as all the others in this place, had made effort and/or been assisted to get to this place, so with much effort and from great distance, they came and they waited. Maybe some of them had friends or family to help them get into the water, and thus on many occasions our lame man would watch somebody else receive their healing, and then have to wait again, perhaps fearing the future of never having anybody to help him into the pool.

Have you ever been there, needing help to receive your miracle, and it has not been there?

Have you ever been the person who feels you should encourage a person in need, to remember Gods goodness in the past, to be real in the present and not ashamed of it, and to believe for a better future? What is your job/role in the situation, it is that of the angel that visited the pool to stir the waters. ***2 Tim 1:6-7 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. NKJV***

To help them into the miracle of their future we must do as Jesus did, to bring the person into the presence of the healer. Jesus asked the man what may appear a stupid question “Do you want to be made well?” Of course, he did we would think because he was laid by the pool, but perhaps he was sat there in a place of no hope for his future, perhaps that was his chair of the present. He may even had been sat in the chair of regret thinking he deserved his lameness because of the sins he had committed in the past, after all you were normally sick because of sin, as believed at the time. He might even have been told he deserved it by some passing religious person.

Thirty Eight years this man had been lame. His body if whole would have given him a sense of purpose and the ability to look after himself and others. 38 years is a long time to be frustrated, but it is never the end with Jesus.

Thirty eight years Paul Manwaring waited to enter into ministry after hearing the call of God, for me it was 40. Thirty eight years I have been married and it is not the end because of Jesus’ call on both our lives. Why did God bring us to this passage today and mention 38 years, and then for Paul to mention it on Friday? I know why and you can guess why.

**Here is the comfort in our present**.

Jesus saw the man lying there. He took notice on this occasion of one man and decided it was his day to move from the present into the future.

Jesus knew the man had been suffering for 38 years, likewise He knows exactly how long you have carried your pain, your burdens, He is always aware of the years, days and hours that you have been waiting. He does not need reminding when you believe He cares more than you do about seeing the answer.

When Jesus asks the man if he wants to be made well, the man does not say YES. So many of us when Jesus asks us if we want Him to change something we do not say yes.

The lame man instead makes excuse:

He effectively says”It’s not my fault I am laying here with my problems.”

This is the number one problem in society today, no one accepts responsibility for the place they are in. Even Christians think they are the exception to power of God being able to change the situation.

Nobody to help him. No body who cares. He cannot move himself. He is effectively insulted and offended by Jesus’ question. He calls Jesus Sir, a title of respect, but an indication that he does not know the person, the power, the goodness of the one who is asking the question. Perhaps in our helpless we respond to our Father in like manner insulting Him by asking Him if He even cares about how we are suffering whilst waiting for our miracle.

The lame man had to give up his religious experience:

Its angels stirring water that make you well

He did not know it was God incarnate, that is God in a man, that was talking to him, if he did he probably would have said yes.

When a believer asks to pray for you are you so confident it’s not God asking? So you reject the offer and say no its okay.

The lame man had to make some effort – are we:

Why had he not in the past asked to be laid on the edge of pool and roll in.

You might have to go and ask for prayer.

You might have to go to some Bible class or teaching.

It is on the word of Jesus that the man must act. “Rise, take up thy bed”. At the appointed time the present will change and the future will become a reality. In the meantime we have to walk in faith of the word that He has spoken. We have to live in the present without fear of the miracle never taking place. Nothing happens without our participation in the process.

The nobleman had to go home without Jesus to find his son healed. He could have walked that journey in fear that he would find a dead son at home, but he did not, because he obeyed the word that showed he believed the word.

This man has to give up being dependant on others after 38 years and rise and take all of that which used to support, his bed, away. He believed in the Presence and word of the miracle worker, his once lame legs became strong as he made the move to rise up. He could have laid there thinking he would never be able to move, and what a fool he would look if he tried and fell over. However, at the word of Jesus he was immediately cured, he felt the power, and got up. Ever felt stirred by a word from God, and then wondered whether it was real, whether it applied to you, of course we have all been there, but faith is the assurance of things hoped for.

The enemy will throw a million negative imaginations, and dozens of circumstances at us, to fear that God will not turn up with the miracle we need to enter the future.

Into this man’s new state the enemy’s were the religious legalists telling him he was not allowed to carry his bed, or be healed on the Sabbath. Some of your closest associates will challenge what God has done if it does not fit into their understanding of how God works. Remember this Gods ways are not our ways, and He can do what He likes when He likes and will not be dictated to by us.

Have joy in every blessing no matter how small you may think it is. Staying in the present with every blessing from the past will give you hope for the future and the miracles that are coming your way. AMEN

**Staying in the present pursuing His Presence**

Strength will arise for those who wait upon the Lord.

WAIT in His Presence