

'Cause we don't want to broach the subject that our rituals don't always work. Spin around three times and you're gonna be healed. Hop on one foot and holler, Jesus! And I declare you're gonna get a breakthrough. It's not grace, it's cheap grace. It's not the blood of Jesus, it's Kool-Aid. It's all the stuff we do that suggests faith but it's really rituals. For 38 years brother no-name had gone to the church at Bethesda and substituted rituals for reformation.

As long as you keep the ritual you're in the clique, 'cause after all there is a sociological need to belong and I'm accepted here. This is where society put people they couldn't heal, at the pool of Bethesda. See there were no hospitals, there were no doctors, there was no medicine as such, and so whenever anything was wrong with you they segregated you from other people and they treated you in colonies of infection so that you would have the benefit of sociological involvement without the embarrassment of being different.

So Jesus, at the end of the festival, stopped by the pool of Bethesda. The pool of Bethesda

is the house of mercy. Mercy. Mercy. And there he saw the halt, the lame, and the blind and the lonely. Because it's lonely when you're impotent. It's lonely when you say for all of these years I should've been further, I never thought I'd get to this age and still be in the same place. The Bible says, when Jesus saw how long he had been there, it wasn't just that he was there, it was how long. How long you've had bad credit, how long you've been without love, how long you've been without accomplishment, how long you've been in debt, how long you've been angry with your sister, how long you and your mother have not been speaking. It's not that we're not speaking, it's just how long!

Thirty-eight years is a long time to be mad. Some of you have been mad so long you can't even remember what you're mad about, you're just... Thirty-eight years is a long time to put up with stuff that don't work, to have sisters that you're not speaking to, to have brothers that you are still mad at, to have

church workers and coworkers on your job that you are secretly angry with because even though you go to work, work ain't workin'. In John chapter 5 verse 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, the whole Texas Island. There is no conversation, there is no communication 'cause Jesus is just looking around.

Have you ever been hurting? And c'mon, we can be honest, because nobody's here but us. Have you ever been hurting and felt like your God was just? Don't you see how lame I am? Don't you see how blind I am? Don't you know how broke I am? Don't you know how hurt I am? And all of these church folks and all of these rituals are getting on my nerves 'cause I've been in it for 38 years and I need something to happen for me. Somebody holler, I need something to happen for me! And you finally come, Jesus and you ain't said nothing. It's the second day of Woman Thou art Loosed and everybody got blessed, you ain't said nothin' to me. Jesus was just looking around.

And then the sovereign God, the omnipotent omnipresent God, the omniscient, which means all-knowing, God, the God who knows everything, asked him a question. Why would God who knows everything ask me a question? Do you really think there's anything you can teach Jesus? So why would a God who is all-knowing ask you a question? When a teacher asks the student a question it is for the student to evaluate his advancement. So he asked him a question. It's a very simple question. Wilt thou be made whole? It's a simple question, but it's kind of a crazy question, all due respect, and if you're gonna strike me with lightning don't do it in front of all of these people and on the internet. But respectfully, sir, why would you ask me, wilt thou be made whole when you see what's wrong with me and you know how long it's been wrong? Why would you ask me wilt thou be made whole? I didn't come here to take a test, Jesus.

But it is not the question that is the most provocative. To me as amazing as the question is, as complex and complicated as it is. I with all diligence will step around the temptation

to spend time dialoguing about the question, because the question is revelation within itself. I must move quickly to the man's answer because the power of the text is in his answer, because his answer tells me why he's been there so long. When the wife asks you a question, it is how you answer it that explains why you are where you are. And I want to make sure that when you leave here that you leave here on a whole 'nother level.

I don't just want you to come down here and go to this big ol' church thing like you've been to Disney World and then go back and resume your place on the porch. Tell your porch, I'm leaving. Tell your porch, I'm leaving. Tell your porch, I'm leaving. And all the systems that you have built around yourself to protect yourself from the expectation of wanting what you see other people with. I will not be on this porch next year. Oh y'all don't mean it, let me try it again. I will not be on this porch next year. Tell everybody you can reach, I will not be on his porch next year. When you see me next year I will not be in this same condition. When I get back next year I'm gonna be on a whole 'nother level.

By this time next year you're gonna be sitting beside a brand-new sista up in here. I will not be in this place again. I may have to deal with something else, but it will not be this same old devil I've been dealing with for 38 years. If I got that much right, make some noise in this place!

The man says, listen to this, this is important, this is important, this is what I want you to get. Listen to how the man explains why he's stuck. He says I have been like this. And this is what I want you to get 'cause this is what the Lord told me to tell you. Everybody has a way of explaining why they're stuck. This story is not a story that he created in the moment. It is a story of the impotent folk. It is how you explain to people why your life has not changed.

So when Jesus asked him a question, which really had nothing to do with his answer, Jesus asked him, will thou be made whole? Which is really a yes or no situation, but he couldn't say yes or no because of the story that he told

to himself. And the Lord sent me here to challenge the story you tell yourself, how you explain what you lost. The narrative that you've given to yourself to explain why you haven't grown. The way you tell the story of your first marriage.

Tonight I don't want to examine the gospel, I wanna examine your gospel, because there's a great deal of difference between the Gospel and your gospel. And I know I'm treading on tough territory, but I came to realize it is not the devil. I'm going to try them over here 'cause they can't handle it over there. It is not the devil that's got you stuck. That's why all them spiritual warfare classes you took didn't change your situation. Because it is not the devil nor any of his assistants that have got you stuck in the same old place. It is not a witch that causes people not to like you on your job. It is not demonic.

That's why knowing yourself every morning has not changed your circumstance. It is not demonic, it is not spiritual, it is the story. The impotent, afflicted, crippled, lame, blind story that you tell yourself about what

happened and why you are still in the same place. He said when when the waters are troubled, Jesus, it's not that I don't want to be better, but while I am coming down the reason I'm like this is that somebody... Oh, I'm gonna mess with you tonight, I'm gonna mess with you tonight.

See, all of us have somebody that we blame. Let me try this section over here. All of us have somebody that we blame as to being the reason why we didn't get any further than we got. I wouldn't have been like this if my father would've stayed with my mother. I wouldn't have been like this if I'd had a good education in the arts. I wouldn't have been like this if my mama would have supported me like she did her sister. The reason I'm stuck, and as long as you point at somebody else as the reason to why you are not moving, it means you can't go forward until that somebody comes back. Because you have given the power of your story to some other character that doesn't have anything to do with your deliverance.

If you got that much of what I'm preaching, gimme some kind of sign. But have you ever

considered that your story could be a lie? I'm not saying that it doesn't have truth in it, but have you left out some significant things that you need to know in order to be able to change? See this man says, it's not my fault I'm like this, it's the people who blocked me. It's not my fault I'm like this. It's not my fault I'm this size, them kids drove me crazy, I had to do something. He says, the reason I'm like this is every time I got ready to move forward somebody got in my way. That means even though it was God's will to heal me, somebody blocked me from getting what God...

Do you really believe that junk? Do you really believe that anybody could block you from getting what God has for you? Do you really believe that them two or three people who hate you could curse what God has blessed? Do you really think that the reason you haven't gotten any further is because you got haters? Please get a life baby, everybody got haters, everybody got somebody that hopes you choke, everybody's got somebody who lies on you and talks about you like a dog. I came to tell you that when God gets ready to bless you no devil in hell...

Touch five people and tell 'em you can't stop this, you can't stop this, you can't. You can't stop it. You can't stop it. You can't stop it. You can't stop it, you can't stop it. When I get ready to get up, you can't stop it. When I get ready to stand up, you can't stop it. When I get ready to go forward, you can't stop it. When I'm getting ready to change my life, you can't stop it. When I get ready to move up, you can't stop it. When I get ready to preach, you can't stop it. When I'm gettin' ready to teach, you can't stop it. You can roll your eyes, but you can't stop it. You can send your notes, but you can't stop it. Touch five people and tell 'em you can't stop it. Your sister can't stop it. Your mama can't stop it. Your ex-husband can't stop it. Your knobby-head children can't stop it. Your haters can't stop it. The rich can't stop it. The roof worker can't stop it, if God be for you.

For the next 60 seconds I want every woman that's got a mouth to give God a praisin' praise. You got 20 seconds. You got 20 seconds to open your mouth and praise God. Touch five women and tell 'em, I'm takin' it back. I'm

takin' it back. I'm takin' back by authority, i'm takin' back my control, I'm takin' back my story, I'm takin' back my decision, I'm takin' back my... It ain't up to you, it ain't up to you, it ain't up to... Slap your sister and say, it's up to me, girl! It's up to me. It's up to me. It's up to me. It's up to me. I might not be able to control my story starting, but I'm going to control... Make some noise. My gospel.

I'm runnin' out of time so I'm gonna get you to help me preach. So tell everybody your preacher says it's up to you. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's up to you. The next year is up to you. Your destiny is up to you. Your future... give God a praise! Slap somebody and tell 'em, I'm not blaming anybody. I'm takin' it back. Give me my joy. Give me my peace. Give me my power. Give me my dignity. Give me my strength. I got strength! Touch your neighbor and say, I know get on your nerves shoutin' and hollerin' like this, but my praise is not up to you, it's up to me. I will bless the Lord and at all times.

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