**Stand Up and Move**

***Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”***

***“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”***

***Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”***

***Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking!***

***John 5:2-9a NLT***

Thirty eight years. Thirty eight years is a very long time to hold onto the hope of anything, let alone for healing of a physical infirmity or disability that was this man’s reality day in and day out. It impacted everything and he sat as a bystander watching life go on around him. Others in his family have jobs, get married, establish active lives as he lay on the covered porch spectator. His life had been reduced to waiting for the pool believed to have healing power to bubble up and vying to get to the water first to see if that would change his circumstance – but to no avail. Others never helped him and always pushed him out of the way. Who wouldn’t feel as though they did not have value.

Thinking about the mindset of this man who had endured this life for 38 years, Jesus’ question is very interesting. In our minds we think “Of course he would want to be healed!”, but I find the question very revealing about the man’s state of mind. We don’t know how old the man was, but it is reasonable to think that he lived this way for most of his life. Perhaps it was hard for him to remember or even imagine what it would be like not to be sick because it had become his identity. We see this in his response. He doesn’t answer Jesus’ question, but rather tells him why he can’t be healed.

Jesus didn’t try to reason with him and explain that he had the power to heal him and convince him to believe. He simply spoke to him as a healed man, whole and complete – stand up, pick up your things, and leave this place you have been settled into for so long.

As we seek to know Jesus more in this year, are you ready for him to question you about the things he wants to heal and change in your life? If he asks you if “Do you want to be healed?”, has it become so much a part of your identity that you are scared that you won’t know who you are without it? When he asks you “Do you want to be out of debt?”, will you respond with how you can’t because of your work situation and inflation or will you trust him to change the way you handle your finances? If he asks you “Do you want to have a meaningful relationship?”, are you willing to set boundaries or even walk away from some relationships to make way for others?

My prayer for all of us this year is that when Jesus asks to provide the thing that will make us whole, that our response to him is a resounding “Yes!” and we will leap up and walk in the healing, provision and identity that he is waiting for us to receive.