

**March 15, 2017**

**The Rev. Patrice Fowler-Searcy '13, Associate Pastor for Mission Ministries, East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh / Board Member, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary**

### **Scripture**

John 5:1-18

<sup>1</sup>After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay many invalids — blind, lame, and paralyzed. <sup>5</sup>One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” <sup>7</sup>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.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” <sup>9</sup>At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a Sabbath. <sup>10</sup>So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” <sup>11</sup>But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” <sup>12</sup>They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” <sup>13</sup>Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. <sup>14</sup>Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” <sup>15</sup>The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. <sup>16</sup>Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. <sup>17</sup>But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” <sup>18</sup>For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

### **Devotional**

Jesus went up to Jerusalem, the place where he ultimately would be lifted up and crucified, would draw all people unto himself, and would be recognized as the Son of God. Yet in this passage Jesus is near the Sheep Gate at the “House of Mercy” (Beth-zatha), where he finds a man who had been ill for 38 years. And Jesus queries the man, “Do you want to be made well?”

That is the question we each face daily: Do we want to be made well? Do we want to be made whole and cleansed of our sin, iniquities, proclivities, and faithlessness that cause us to be outside the will of God? Much like the Israelites whose faithlessness led them to wander in the desert for 38 years, our faithlessness leads us to dry places—or finds us sitting at the House of Mercy, yet unable to lift up our mats and walk. During this Lenten season, as we contemplate the faithfulness of God and the sacrifice of Christ, may we realize that we are healed, whole, and redeemed by God’s grace, mercy, and love.

### **Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks that your faithfulness is from everlasting to everlasting. As we contemplate the sacrifice of Christ, may we realize that we are empowered by your mercy to leave behind every weight that might cause us to stumble and to live faithfully as your children. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.