

Good morning. Well as you can see, Kelly and I are twins. He's a lot taller and I'm a lot wider, but we are definitely in the body and in the family of Christ and it's good to be with you this morning. I bring you greetings from New Covenant Worship Center and the family there we are a diverse church of black, white and Hispanic and other and we are excited about what the Lord is doing there. I share with our church every Sunday morning, it is just wonderful when we can come together and we can praise God. Probably one of the joys that I get out of our church is that every Sunday morning I get a glimpse of what heaven's going to look like as people from every culture come together to worship God. Lift up to the Lord in prayer this morning let's seek His face. Father, in the name of Jesus, we glorify you and we magnify you this morning. Father we pray that you would meet with us in this place. I pray this morning Father that your people will see very little of Luther, but Father all of you. Help me this morning to decrease that you might increase. Hide me behind the foot of your cross. Lord I pray that you would transform many of us this morning. Don't let none of us leave the same way we come in, but help us Lord to be transformed by your glory and by your presence. And certainly Father we'll give you all the praise, the honor and the glory for it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

John chapter 5 writes an incredible story for us this morning. Once you find it, you will find these words written:

And after this, there was the Feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And now there is in Jerusalem a sheep gate, a pool which in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. And in these lay a great multitude of sick people. Blind, lame, paralyzed waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel when down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water and 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 for 38 years. And when Jesus saw him lying there He knew that he had been in that condition for 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 in before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise and take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well and he 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 unlawful for you to carry your bed." And he answered them, "He who made me well said to me 'take up your bed and walk.'" And then they asked him, "Who was the man who said to you 'take up your bed and walk?'" But the one who was healed did not know who He 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 worse things come upon you." The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well.

Earlier in the chapter, John shares with us that Jesus comes to Galilee and as He comes to Galilee we remember in Cana that it was the first miracle that Jesus performed at a wedding feast. His mother came to Him and requested it. The second time He comes to Cana of Galilee it is a nobleman, it is a man of great stature, a man of influence within the community who comes to Him on behalf of

his son. This man has walked twenty miles to get to Jesus. No doubt he had probably heard of all the great things that Jesus has done and he comes and he pleads with Jesus to come back with him to Capernaum to heal his son. And Jesus looks at the man and the desperateness of his heart and simply tells the man that your son is healed. There must have been something in the power of Jesus' words and Jesus' voice. The man simply turned and received the spoken word of God and his son was healed.

John later on tells us that Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem and as He's going up to Jerusalem to the temple where the word and where worship is being taught. I think I find it to be a little bit ironic that Jesus is going up to Jerusalem, because I am fully aware and fully believe with all of my heart that whenever you and I pursue God, He takes us up. He takes us up. He takes us up into His presence, He takes us – all of our issues in life – He brings us up, brings us to a higher level in Him. Jesus is going up to Jerusalem and from a distance at a certain elevation you can look over and you can see the pool of Bethesda, which is known in Hebrew as the House of Mercy. It has five porches, five porticos, five columns, with tapestry draped around it. And from a distance when you look down upon it, it looks as the almost similarity to the tablets that Moses brought back with him from Mount Sinai. It represents the Law. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem at this time because it is the festival. History tells us it is the Festival of Pentecost. It is the giving of the Law. The town is filled with people, with the hustle and bustle as they celebrate the giving of the Law. The town is filled with tradition, with religion, and with tradition. They've come to do their priestly orders, they've come to acknowledge and recognize the giving of the Law. The city is abuzz with people.

Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem and He navigates Himself to Bethesda, to the House of Mercy. And as He enters into Jerusalem He comes through the sheep gate. The sheep gate is where they would bring the sheeps and sacrifice them there and I thought it to be rather ironic that Jesus would enter through the sheep gate because He is our lamb to be sacrificed. He comes through the sheep gate, He makes His way to the Pool of Bethesda and John records for us that there was a man who was there for 38 years coming every day to the pool with issues of life, difficulties of life. Throughout birth, he has suffered a disease that has affected his ankles and has never has been able to walk. And for 38 years whether somebody carries him or whether he drags himself there, whatever the case may be, for 38 years here's a man who's been coming to the House of Mercy dealing with the same dilemma and the same problem day after day. Can you even begin to comprehend? Thirty-eight years of coming to the House of Mercy, coming to church dealing with the same problem, dealing with the same issue and never being healed. Thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years coming to a place where worship is given, the spoken word is ministered and you've been coming for 38 years. You've probably in those 38 years have watched people get healed and delivered and yet you participate in the same service and yet you still walk away somewhat defeated. No deliverance, no breakthrough, no healing, no nothing. Thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years of probably dealing with the same infirmity, thirty-eight years of dealing with broken relationships, thirty-eight years

of dealing with depression, thirty-eight years of dealing with oppression, thirty-eight years.

And no doubt there's probably some people here this morning, this morning they've come to this place and if we were to be transparent, there are some of us who have been wrestling with some issues for a long period of time. We've come and we've worshipped and my God, have we had great worship. We've had tremendous prayers from across this world, the globe, and yet here we come. Thirty-eight years. Thirty-eight years. I don't know about you all, but 38 years I, you know I guess for me I think what Luther woulda did, I think Luther would've got up early one morning, drug himself in front of that pool and I just would've waited. And if it just looked like that water was about to do something, I'da rolled myself up in that water, 'cause I wouldn't let nobody beat me from getting what the Lord has for me. I mean I would be so desperate that there would be no way anybody would've beat me to getting what God has for me. And for 38 years this man and probably one time in his life was at the front of the pool, but yet as time went on he made his way to the back.

One time he probably was waiting and someone beat him. The next Sunday is another person, the next Sunday is another person, the next Sunday it's another, till all the sudden you become disheartened. And you think it'll never change. Thirty-eight years this man has been coming to the House of Mercy. The city is full of tradition and everything. There's been times I've looked at this text and I've wondered to myself, 'How in the world could Jesus just walk past all those people? Surely He had the power to heal everyone at the pool. But yet He walks past people, people with infirmities, people with issues, people with problems, people with sicknesses and cancers and family issues and mental issues and depression and yet Jesus navigates His way through the people. I have wondered, Blackhawk, how in the world could Jesus do that? But what would cause Jesus to single out one person? I've come to believe that you know what, I believe Jesus knew, I believe that Jesus knew that there was just that one person in the house who was ready for a transformation. He was ready to go to the next level. I believe there were just some folks that were there that they liked what they had. They were used to it. They have come accustomed to the tradition. And so this is just the way we do it. This is just the way it is. That's the way they spoke it into their spirit. They made it up in their mind that this is just the way it is. This is how we do it here and so we come to the pool and I'm going to find my spot and that's just the way it is.

It's kind of like the way we are sometimes in church. This is the way we do it here. This is just who we are, this is how we do it. Don't change anything. We like it the way it is. I mean, do you know, it's kind of funny. Some people came this morning and they looked and said, 'Wait a minute here. Hey, that ain't Kelly. They done changed it. That's not Kelly, that's not what we do here. They changed it.' And so they like what they have; they like the condition that they're in and they miss having this incredible encounter with God.

I believe there were some that was there and they became cynical. They became cynical. They said in their heart, this is, it'll will never happen. You'll never get that deliverance. You'll never get that healing. That marriage will never come back

together. There's no way we can get that scholarship to go to college. It'll never happen. We can't transform the city. The churches can't never come together. It'll never happen. They just become so cynical. Even with, at the House of Mercy they just they are cynical. I didn't come for that this morning. Cynical.

There were probably some who had just simply lost faith. They have just gotten weary in the journey. Life has dealt them some incredible blows that have riveted them. People have walked out of their lives. They have stumbled in conditions that they don't even know how to get out of. And they have lost faith. And yet Jesus comes to the Pool of Bethesda and He navigates His way through the people. He, He kind of just walks through the people and He finally comes and He rests at the back of the pool and He looks at this man who has never walked in his life and he looks at him. And Jesus asks a profound question, that I believe that Jesus is still asking today. He looks at the man and He simply says to the man because He says, 'Do you wish to get well?' I mean, He knows that this man has been in this condition for a long time and yet Jesus knows that deep down within his heart this man has come this morning but with hope and with a desire for change. I wonder this morning who has come with an expectation of hope and a desire to another level in Jesus. Ah my God, you know what if I was back at New Covenant that's shoutin' territory.

They come, they come with an expectation. They come ready to receive from God. They're just waiting for just any moment for God to show up and do something. And Jesus knows that that's bubbling inside the man's heart that He navigates His way past everyone and looks at the man and says to the man 'do you wish to get well?' My God, you know what, I'm glad He didn't ask Luther. 'Cause I probably would've came up with some kind of catchy, wordy response. Something religious, something you know, something like "duh"! Thirty-eight years, thirty-eight years I've been dealing with this issue. Thirty-eight years I've been tormented by this spirit of demonic oppression. Thirty-eight years I've been wrestling with this sickness, wrestling and you're asking me do I wish to get well? Duh!

Jesus looks at him and even this morning in this place He's looking and He's saying to us this morning, do you wish to get well? Are you ready to let go of that one thing that keeps holding you back? Are you willing to let go of that one thing that you, God has been wrestling with you time and time again are you really, are you ready? Is this your Sunday morning to get well? And I like the man, the man Jesus asked him do he wish to get well and the man looks at Jesus and he comes with, like we often do, he begins to come up with excuses. He says every time I try to get into the pool, someone always beats me into the pool and so I can never make it in. And so I've kind of fallen to the back. And Jesus never asks him for excuses. He just simply said do you wish to get well. I wonder this morning, what's going to be our excuse this morning? What's going to be our excuse? If Kelly was here, he'd probably be continually talking about the awe of God. I mean what's going to be our excuse of missing the awesomeness of God this morning? What excuse can you and I give this morning to a Savior who has redeemed mankind with His precious blood? What excuse can you and I give to the creator of the universe? What excuse? What's your excuse? What are you

going to make up?

And Jesus looks at the man and Jesus says to the man 'do you wish to be well?' and the man came up with the excuses and Jesus simply looked at him and says 'pick up your pallet and walk.' And at the moment of the spoken word, like the noblemen who didn't see his son, he just took off because the Lord spoke it. When Jesus says 'take up your pallet and walk' the man does something that rivets me. I mean he does something that he stretches himself. He, he, he stands because you know what I've come to realize that whenever we trust God at His word, whenever we take God at His word, when you and I receive His word in our hearts and we take the step of faith, it stretches us to do things that we have never done before in our lives.

I have three kids. And two girls and a boy. And I remember when they were little, especially my son, Michael. Babies have a way of making you, making adults sound stupid. 'Cause it changes our whole language. You know we talk intelligently and audibly to each other and we can understand each other. But when we see that pretty, little baby we just lose it. You know we start talking stuff like aw the boody bitty boopy baby. The boody bitty baby. You know, I'm a grandfather now and all the sudden that's all I hear. You know I'm talking to my wife and we're talking about the economy and we're talking politics and everything else and as soon as my daughter brings the grandbaby in it's like aw the boody baby. I remember when Michael was little and I remember standing him up against the table and I would run a little bit of distance and I would say 'come on Michael, come on Michael, come on, come to daddy, come on to daddy' and I would watch Michael and Michael would push himself up and he would kind of like stumble to me and then he would fall and I would be there to catch Michael. Then I would lean him back up again and at my spoken word, I would say, 'come on Michael, come to daddy, come to daddy' and Michael would get up and he'd come and all of the sudden he started walking because as his ankles began to develop and take shape and form, he was able to stand up and come to me.

And I got to believe on that day at the House of Mercy, the Father shows up and He looks at that man who has never walked in his life and he says to the man, stand up, come on, you can do this, you can do this. I know you have never done this before, but I'm here to catch you and I hear by the Spirit of God that God is saying the same thing this morning. You have never done this before. I know it's a stretch, but you can do it, come on Blackhawk. We need you in the city, we need you, come on you can do this. And all the sudden, the man stands up because when you heed to the voice of God you'll do stuff that you've never done before in your life. Not only does he stand up, but God gives you the power to carry the thing that at one time was carrying you. He picked up his pallet. This thing was, it was his crutch. It was the thing that was carrying him at one time. And even today there's some of us that there's some stuff that we've been carrying for a long time. We've been wrestling with for a long time and today by the power of God, He says, oh no, you can carry this thing. I'm going to give you power. This thing won't carry you, but you'll be able to carry it. He stands up and he starts walking. He starts walking. He starts walking, he starts doing what he

has never done by faith.

And I wish John would've ended the story there, but he doesn't. Because as the man is walking, it happens. It happens. He runs across some religious folks. Folks who are just accustomed to tradition. Religious people. And here's a man who's been coming for 38 years to the pool, has never walked, and on that particular Sunday they see him and instead of rejoicing – I mean, come on, someone here who has been ill for 38 years and we know about it and all of the sudden they're healed and delivered. Come on, you'll we ought to be high-fiving, shouting hallelujah, thank you Jesus, our God is an awesome God! But instead they looked at him and they simply said, who told you? Who told you you could do that? Who told you you could pick up your pallet and walk? Who told you, who gave you the authority to do that? And even – that's exactly what the enemy is saying today. He's saying today to some of us this morning, he's saying who told you? Who told you you can be delivered? Who told you that your marriage could be mended and reconciled? Who told you that you can be healed? Who told you you can be set free? That is no the way we do it here. Who told you? Who told you that you could get that scholarship and you can go to college and excel and become something vital to the community? Who told you? Who told you? Who told you ?

He questions our faith. The enemy questions our faith. Who told you? Because he wants to keep us locked down by tradition. And they looked at him with a snarled, self-righteous look of indignation and simply said who told you? This man has had an encounter with Jesus and they ask who told you? And even now there are some people probably saying who told you to get off that platform, that's why I'm getting right back up here, because we don't do it that way up here. That's not what we do here at Blackhawk, who told you? Get back up there. OK, I'm back up here. Mental slip, thought I was at New Covenant. Who told you? The tragedy is that the man couldn't tell him. The tragedy is because he let Jesus slip away. How do you let Jesus slip away? Thirty-eight years and all of the sudden this guy shows up and with so much love and power and tells me to stand up and walk and I take Him at His word and I do it. And all of the sudden I can walk, slip away? Look Blackhawk, I'm 200 and (muffled) pounds. (laughter) There is no way Jesus was going to slip from me. Jesus would've been carrying this black man like an Indian carries a little child on his back. There was no way Jesus would've got away from me. I would've been all over Jesus, but yet he let Jesus slip away.

I wonder this morning who's going to let Jesus slip away? He's here to meet you in the most incredible way. He brought me all the way from the south side of town to come out here this day. Do you want to get well? Do you really want to get well? Are we really ready for change? Are we really ready to go to the next level in God or are we going to let Jesus slip away? He slips away. They said who told you? I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

I like the man as I get ready to close, I like the man because what the man does kind of rivets me. Because he's not like many of us, because usually you know how we do it. Whenever we ask God to do something for us as desperate as we are and all of the sudden because He's full of grace and mercy and compassion

He heals us, we have a tendency to go back to doing what we used to do. But not this man. He has this incredible encounter with Jesus and all, of all the places he goes to back to, of all the places he could've ran to, he comes to the church. He shows up at the temple and I can imagine that as he walks through those doors of the temple, Jesus has already arrived and has already been praying and in His heart, Jesus knew that he would be there. He knew that he would come. And I can image as he walks through those doors, Jesus looks over and sees him and as he makes his way toward him I can hear the heart of Jesus say I knew you'd be here. I knew you would be here. I knew you would come because your hungry for change. You want more from me. I knew you would come. I knew you would be here because you're ready for an encounter with me. You're not like everyone else who just comes out of routine and comes out of tradition. No, not you. You come hungry for more of me. And I knew you'd be here. And so I've been waiting just for you 'cause I knew you would come. I knew you would come. I knew you would be here. And He looks at the man and the man looks at Jesus and Jesus says to him, He says to him, He says, 'Sin no more, lest anything worse would happen to you.' In other words, don't fall back into the same trap. Don't let nobody push you back into the same trap. Don't go back to doing the same thing. Now that you've been healed, now that you've been delivered, now that what you've been thirsting for has been answered, don't go back to doing the same thing. Don't miss this moment. Don't go back to doing the same thing. And not only does this man, because what Jesus does is not only does Jesus want to touch him physically, but Jesus wants to heal him spiritually. Jesus just doesn't want to touch this man so that he can walk. Jesus wants to touch him in such a way that he's able to go out and tell everyone, just like he did in the text, that it was Jesus who touched me. It was Jesus who healed me. It was Jesus who sets me free.

And I don't know about you, but I'm glad this morning, that I can echo the same words of the man that it was Jesus who touched me. It was Jesus who healed me. It was Jesus who delivered me when I couldn't deliver myself, it was God who set me free. Aren't you glad this morning that it's God who set you free? Aren't you glad this morning that it's God who heals you and it's God who will deliver you?

And so this morning He asks the same question of you and I. It all starts with our heart. Do you really wish to be well? Is there anyone in the place who want to go to another level in God? Then let's pray.

Father, in the name of Jesus, we come like the man at the Pool of Bethesda, crying out for you this morning. We've been in conditions for a long time. We've struggled in areas for a long time. But this morning, Father, we know that you're here and you're speaking to your people. So Father this morning we open ourselves up to you and we say Lord, touch us today. Give us the faith and the strength to overcome every obstacle that keeps us from becoming all that you would have us to be. Today, Lord Jesus, I thank you for my brothers and my sisters at Blackhawk. Continue Lord to use us, your church, for your glory. For it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And Amen.

Let's stand together. What a blessing it is to be with you this morning. I pray

God's blessings upon you all, my brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's look to the Lord.

Now may the grace of God, the peace of God, the sweet communion of His Holy Spirit, let Him rest, rule and abide with His people both now and forever. God bless you and have a wonderful day. Amen. (applause)