

Easter 6 Year C

Elsa, our 3 year old, has become a bit of a Bible thumper recently.

You see, my sister Meg, who is Elsa's godmother, dutifully gave her a children's Bible a few years ago, and like most Bibles, it has been sitting on a shelf collecting dust. Until about 2 weeks ago. All of a sudden Elsa wants to read it every night, and I mean all of it.

Now it is a children's Bible, so it is selective and it has lots of pictures. But even at age 3 Elsa can pick out Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and I think she can be forgiven for thinking that every man with a white beard is Santa. We have Noah Santa and Moses Santa and such.

My real point is that, even at her age she is already settling on her favorite Bible stories. Her number 1 favorite is David and Goliath, because she says that she likes giants. She's also fond of Noah's ark, and, of course, the Christmas story.

We all have our favorite Bible stories, and actually, the gospel lesson this morning is one of mine. Oh, it's not a particularly famous one. The man in the story is never even given a name. But I really like it for several reasons.

First, this pool with 5 porticos is one which archeologists have actually found in Jerusalem, and I always think it's cool when they find something that is mentioned in the Bible. Second, the mythology around that pool is pretty interesting. Apparently the belief was that angels stirred the water of the pool and that anyone who got in the water while it was stirring would be healed, which explains why the man was upset that someone always blocked him from getting in when the water was stirring.

Now, while those points are interesting to me, it is really the exchange between Jesus and the man, and the truth that comes to me through the exchange, that makes it one of my favorite stories in the Bible.

You know, one of the things that drive me crazy in life is when I ask someone a question and the person goes on and on in reply but never actually answers the question. So I ask it again. Well, that's what happened here. Jesus approaches the pool surrounded with people and somehow knows that this man has been there a long time. Jesus asks him a simple question; "Do you want to be made well?" Then, instead of answering the question the man starts complaining about all the reasons why he couldn't be well: "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 always steps down ahead of me."

"Stand up" Jesus said.

The reason I love this little story is because it reminds us that there are always plenty of reasons why we can't be well. People will always not be there when we need them and people will always be in our way when we want to get through to the pool. And I love this story because it is a needed reminder that to focus on all those reasons is to miss God's point entirely.

Do you want to be well? How would you answer that question today? Is it financial pressure that makes it feel impossible to be well? Is it a health problem that is in the way? Is it your worrying about someone else?

Stand up! That is, metaphorically, stand up. The message is that we can be well whenever you and I are ready to turn all these perceived problems, over to God and simply answer the question: "Yes, Lord, I want to be well."

We all know that, barring the rare miracle; we are stuck for the most part with the limitations of these bodies. However, what we hopefully learn as we mature as Christians is that wellness is not something that comes when we have everything working perfectly.

Wellness is when we are at peace with God, and so we can be well anytime. It is understandable that most of us respond like the man in the story, seeing obstacles all around us.

But it is important to realize that all we need to do is answer the question, and that when we answer, "Yes Lord, I want to be well," then we are already half way there. Amen.