

A Second Opinion

John 5:1-9

We are very familiar with the phrase. Actually, at times we encourage one another to go for second opinions. It is common to seek a second opinion when it comes to health issues, but we also consult the view of others before spending a great amount of money on a car, a home, and so forth.

We get second opinions for several reasons:

- To make educated decisions,
- To expand the spectrum of our choices,
- To find answers that fit our needs better,
- To confirm that whatever has been stated to us previously is correct.

The point is that we go for second opinions to make sure that we are on the right track. People say it all the time, “*Second opinions can save lives and resources.*” When needed, I always suggest a second opinion from an expert. Today, I want to encourage you to seek a second opinion. You may be thinking, a second opinion for what? Don’t worry... Soon, you will know what I’m talking about.

Here is the deal. Even though we know the value of second opinions, we don’t always follow through with this important practice. There are people who were given a negative opinion once and have kept it in their minds and hearts for many years. I am talking about opinions such as:

- “*you will not be able to do this or that...*”
- *it’s not going to get any better...*
- *you are like that because you inherited it and you cannot change it...*
- *it is worthless... don’t even try... etc.”*

There are people who are emotionally and spiritually troubled and burdened today because they accepted the first negative opinion that was given to them and never questioned such judgment. There are people who have their present and their future paralyzed, because they have believed and embraced an incomplete opinion about themselves and have never consulted the opinion of the Expert of experts, God Almighty.

Many times, we are socially, emotionally and psychologically crippled because we have never sought the opinion God has about us.

In the bible story we read a few moments ago, we learned of a man that had been paralyzed for 38 years. When discussing this text, we usually talk about the physical condition of this man and its social implications. The impairment of the man who lived or stayed most of the time by the Bethesda pool had several ramifications. This man could not provide for himself, so he had no option but to depend on the mercy of the people in town.

Even though I don't want to profile the people living in the vicinity of the pool of Bethesda in a negative way, I cannot help but think that they were not very merciful with this guy. The assertion of the paralytic, "*I have **no one** to help me into the pool when the water is stirred*" (v. 7) makes me believe that **no one** in town believed that he was worth the time and the effort to carry him into the pool.

Although it is not explicitly said in the text, the actions of the inhabitants of this place were sending a message to this paralytic that was not very encouraging.

Imagine you are the paralytic. You are so physically broken that you cannot make it to the pool on your own. You have been waiting for 38 years for someone to help you get to the place where you are going to get better. But, every time the miracle is closer than ever, no one shows up to help.

I put myself in the position of this person. I am the paralytic. In the last 38 years, I have seen how many others with similar conditions have received help and healing. Even though no one has openly said a word to me, I can hear loud and clear what the actions of the people in town are telling me. I cannot move, but my ability to hear the words that are not spoken have increased as time goes by. I am broken not only physically but also emotionally.

I can clearly see why “*I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.*” When people see that the water is stirred they hurry to help others who seem to have more potential than me or at least have better chances.

Interestingly, at the moment when the water is stirred, no one makes eye contact with me. It seems they do not want me to perceive their thoughts. But I get it.

They think that at my age and with my condition, I am beyond “*fixability.*” They think that even though I have an honorable hope, in real life I have no chances. They are more than sure that it is not going to get any better for me, that I am so defective that giving me a chance is like throwing punches in the air, aiming for nothing. They think that I am a lost cause.

But that’s not the worst part. The worst part is that I have come to believe it myself: I was born to be physically and emotionally crippled. I think they are right, “I am good for nothing, but to ask for alms.”

I hope you see what I am trying to say. I don’t see any other way to explain why there was ***no one*** (no family member and no friend) ready to assist this person. I can’t find a way to explain why there was ***no one*** compassionate enough to help this guy into the pool except from the idea that people thought it was a useless attempt.

So, as Jesus approached the site, he learned about this man and his paralyzed condition. I am pretty sure Jesus could see beyond the

obvious. I am pretty sure the Lord knew this guy was broken to the core; that his past and present history was defining his future.

But Jesus appeared on the scene and changed the script. Jesus changed the narrative that was subjugating and causing more brokenness in this man. *“Do you want to get well?”* I take Jesus’ question to mean, **“Do you want a second opinion? Do you want to know what I think about you and your situation?”** *“Do you want to get well?”*

People of God, perhaps you have been carrying around the negative opinions you were given many years ago. Perhaps, you have been crippled by the views of those who said that you are not beautiful enough or strong enough. Perhaps, you’ve never questioned the views of those who, with their words and actions, made you believe that you are worthless, that you don’t deserve an opportunity in life, that you are not worthy of faithfulness, love, care and dedication. If you or someone you know are in that position, I want you to know (and you need to let those people know), “You need a second opinion.”

The paralytic needed a second opinion. The narrative of his life needed to be changed for him to get unstuck, for him to get well. Jesus had a different version of who this guy was in the sight of God and the Lord was ready to share that with the invalid. *“Do you want to get well?”*

One of the things that I learn from this and many other biblical stories is that **healing and transformation take place in our lives when we accept and embrace the opinion God has about us.** Do you want to get well? Do you want to be healed and have a new life story?

People may think that you are beyond “fix-ability,” that there is no remedy for you, that addicting behaviors are part of your DNA. That may be the opinion of some people, but God has a different opinion about you and your situation. Let me give you some illustrations from the Biblical narrative.

- People saw Gideon as a member of the weakest clan and the least of his family, but God had a different opinion about him. The Lord called him *mighty warrior* (Judges 6).
- David was seen as the youngest, the least significant member of his family. But, God had a different opinion about David. God saw him as a king when no one else did.
- A woman was brought before Jesus as a convicted criminal. Some people saw her as someone deserving to be stoned to death. But, Jesus saw in her a person in need of forgiveness, and with great love the Lord said to her, “*Neither do I condemn you. Now go and sin no more*” (John 8:11).
- People perceived Zacchaeus as a despicable human being. Jesus saw him as a son of Abraham, one needing and eligible for salvation.

I could go on with examples from the Bible. Nevertheless, here is what I want you to know.

- When you are perceived as worthless, God sees you as valuable, as a treasured possession.
- When you are perceived as too fat, too old, too skinny, and too young, God sees you and tells you, “You are fearfully and wonderfully made.”
- When you are discriminated against, God says, “You are mine. You are accepted and unconditionally loved.”
- When people see you as deserving nothing else but criticism and condemnation, God sees that you are eligible for forgiveness and a fresh start.
- When you are perceived as a loser, God sees you as a winner. “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).
- When you feel forsaken and forgotten, remember that you are cared for (1 Peter 5:7).

If the narrative of your life has been one of rejection, condemnation, humiliation, brokenness and abandonment, there is someone who is ready to change your history forever. Jesus Christ wants to touch you with healing power. The question is: “Do you want to get well? Are you ready to receive a second opinion, God’s opinion for your life?”

Dear church, take this to heart: You need to seek God’s opinion about who you truly are, because **what God knows about you is more important than what others think about you**. If you need a second opinion, seek God’s opinion and make it the foundation of who you are in the world.

God’s opinion gives you strength and victory as long as you decide to take a step of faith, unlearn the old, broaden your mind, and work hard to get ahead. No matter your age or your genes, today the Lord wants you to receive his opinion.

This goes for you, your family, friends, and the people you encounter every day. You don’t have to be paralyzed by a history of anger issues, substance abuse, low self-esteem, and bitterness. You don’t have to be paralyzed by negative opinions, those that have been dumped on you, and those that have been self-imposed. You can have a brand-new history, because the Creator of heaven and earth, the Expert in making all things new (Revelation 21:5), is capable, willing and ready to speak words of life that will heal and transform you for good.

Remember that **you are accepted, loved, forgiven, and valuable to the Creator of the universe**. Remember, you are eligible for a fresh start. Remember, because the act of remembering who you are in God’s sight will better equip you to be a new person in the world. The act of remembering who you are in God’s sight will help you show God’s love to others and build deeper relationships.

Prayer...