

Hi, my name is Matt and I have a new life in Christ. I have a good heart, but I still hurt people. I've still been hurt by. I have my own hurts and hang ups. I have my own wounds.

I have my own stuff. If you were here a few weeks ago, you heard Sean talk about his past struggles with alcohol. You heard Maggie talk about five years of her life where she was life of the party, but there wasn't much life in her soul. If you've listened to me, months ago I talked about past struggles with pornography. And at this point you're probably asking what kind of pastors does this church hire?

But we hire people here who are broken people but have been redeemed and have new life in Jesus. So in light of all that, this is my sign for the week. This is the no pretend zone. Sherwood Oaks is a no pretend zone. A statement Shawn made a few weeks ago is that healing begins where pretending ends.

So this is the no pretend zone. So this whole series is we're not going to pretend anymore. We're not going to pretend. We're going to seek God for healing. So this series is called Hope and Healing.

So we want healing, we want hope in our lives. And this week we're talking about a story of Jesus where he healed a man who really had very little hope. So John chapter five, I'm going to read just the dialogue between Jesus and this man. But here's a scenario. Jesus was coming to what's called the Pool of Bethesda.

It was in Jerusalem. Imagine bigger than a football field, couple different pools, surrounded by sidewalks and porches and things like that, but a big area. And there were multitude of people, the Bible tells a multitude of people there who were blind, who were lame, had all kinds of things going on. And they were there because whenever the water stirred, so it might have been some kind of natural spring. Whenever it stirred, they believed they might get some kind of healing.

So you can imagine that environment being a little bit depressing and, and hopeless because everybody there was down on their luck, so to speak, but they had physical stuff and their emotional life was probably low, right? So Jesus comes into this setting and among the multitude of people, he approaches one person the Bible tells it was a man who had been lame for 38 years. We don't know if he was 38 years old or older, but he had been 38 years. And Jesus walks up to him and looks him straight in the face and says, do you want to get well now? This is one of the questions of Jesus that seems a little bit weird.

Like, what do you mean? Do you want to get well? Jesus asked the man, do you want to get well? But he looks at him and the man responds. And this is what the man says.

He said, sir, I have no one to help me out and get in the pool. When the water is stirred, while I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. He's like, I can't, I want to get well, but I can't. And then Jesus simply responds to him and says, get up, pick up your mat and walk. The man gets up.

38 years he hadn't walked. He gets up and he walks. So this dialogue of him saying of Jesus saying, do you want to get well? And then the man giving the yeah, but I can, I've tried. And then Jesus says, you can.

I'll give you the power to stand up and walk. So we're going to look at that story because it's like, why him? He wasn't even looking out for Jesus. He didn't know who Jesus was, but why him? And then my response to that is, why not you?

Why can't Jesus do that in your life? Because he takes situations that are hopeless and brings hope. He takes situations where there's healing, physical at times, often emotional healing. And Jesus does that for us. So the question for the day is simply, do you want to get well?

That's the question Jesus asked this man. That's the question that we're asking. And by that I mean you might have your own, you know, struggles and hurts. So we're going to break it up in different ways. First part, we're going to look at this.

Do you want to get well? I'm just going to emphasize, do you want to get well? You might have your own struggles and hurts and hang ups, things that were done to you that were hurtful, things that you've done that were hurtful or wrong or even sinful. And you're trying to figure out, what do I do with that? You might have fear of rejection, fear of intimacy.

You might struggle with alcohol, porn, sexual identity, anger, gambling. You might say, I'm not good enough. I'm depressed, I'm anxious, I'm lonely, I'm defensive. I don't trust others, I don't trust God. I can't forgive myself, I can't forgive others.

I don't know what your issue is. We all have our stuff. But this series is about how Jesus can bring healing to that stuff. That's why it's the no Pretend zone. We can bring healing.

So do you want to get well? I'm not talking about the person next to you. I'm not talking about your husband, your wife, your mom, your dad, friends, people that have hurt. I'm not talking about them. Jesus is talking to you.

He's talking to that man, do you want to get well? And my hope is your answer is, yes, I do. What's next? What do I do? So that's the first

part.

Do you want to get well? Now we're going to emphasize, do you want to get well? And you might say, well, that's kind of an odd question. And why did Jesus ask this man, do you want to get well? Because I'm sure we would assume the man would say yes.

But I think Jesus was getting at a deeper issue that you and I can all relate to, is sometimes we stopped wanting. Our desire has dropped because we just figure it's not working. And this is as good as it gets. And I'm going to read a story. It'll take a few minutes to read, because I want to talk about this sense of hopelessness that we kind of get to in life when we think, I want to see change, but it's not happening.

I can't. I can't get to the pool, whatever. And we get to the point where we think, this must be as good as it gets. Even as a Christian, this is as good as it gets. It's not true, but that's where we get to.

So this story is called the Parable of the Sea Lion. So just listen for the next few minutes as I read this again. It's about hope and hopelessness, and it was in a book by a man named John Eldredge. But I'm just going to read the story. So wherever you are right now, if you just want to relax, you can close your eyes, you can drink your coffee, but just listen to the story.

The Parable of the Sea Lion. Once upon a time, there lived a sea lion who had lost the sea. He lived in a country known as the Barren Lands, high on a plateau far from any coast. It was a place dry and dusty. They could only be called a desert.

Of course, it must seem strange to you that such a beautiful creature should wind up in a desert at all. He was, mind you, a sea lion. But things like this do happen. How the sea lion came to the Barren Lands, no one could remember. It all seemed so very long ago.

In fact, it appeared as though he had always been there. Not that he belonged in such an Arid place? How could that be? He was, after all, a sea lion. But as you know, once you have lived so long in a certain spot, no matter how odd you come to think of it, as home.

There was a time, many years back, when the sea lion knew he was lost. In those days, he would stop every traveler he met to see if he might help him find his way back to the sea. But no one seemed to know the way. So on he searched, but never finding. After years without success, the sea lion took refuge beneath a solitary tree beside a very small water hole.

The tree provided refuge from the burning rays of the sun, which was very fierce in this place. And the water hole, though small and muddy,

was wet in its own way. Here he settled down and got on as best he could. Quite often in the evening, he would go and sit upon his favorite rock, a very large boulder which lifted him off the burning sand and allowed him to view the entire country. There he would remain for hours into the night, silhouetted against the sky.

And on the best of nights, when the wind shifted to the east, a faint smell of salt air would come to him on that breeze. Then he would close his eyes and imagine himself once more at the sea. When he lay himself down to sleep, he would dream of a vast, deep ocean, twisting and turning, diving and twirling. He would swim and swim. When he awoke, he thought he heard the sound of breakers.

The sea lion loved his rock, and even loved waiting night after night for sea breezes that might come. Especially, he loved the dreams those memories would stir. But as you well know, even the best of dreams cannot go on. And in the morning, when the sea lion woke, he was still in the barren lands. Sometime he would close his eyes, try to fall back asleep.

It never seemed to work, for the sun was always very bright. Eventually, it became too much for him to bear. He began to visit his rock only on occasion. I have too much to do, he told himself. I cannot waste my time just idling about.

He really did not have so much to do. The truth of it was, working so far from home was such a disappointment. He didn't want to have those wonderful dreams anymore. The day finally came when he stopped going to his rock altogether. He no longer lifted his nose to the wind when the sea breezes blew.

The sea lion was not entirely alone in those parts, for he was there. It was there he met the tortoise. Now, this tortoise was an ancient creature, so weathered by his life in the barren lands that at first the sea lion mistook him for A rock. He told the tortoise of his plight, hoping that this wise one might be able to help him. Perhaps, the tortoise mused, this is the sea.

His eyes appeared to be shut against the bright sun, but he was watching the sea lion very closely. The sea lion swept his flippers once again, his side gliding to the end of the water hole and back, and says, I don't know. It isn't very deep. Somehow I thought the sea would be broader and deeper. At least I hope so.

You must learn to be happy here, the tortoise told him one day, for it's unlikely you shall ever find this sea of yours. Deep in his old, shriveled heart, the tortoise envied the sea lion and his sea. But I belong to the sea. We were made for each other. Perhaps, said the tortoise, but you've been gone so long now.

The sea has probably forgotten you. This thought has never occurred to the sea lion, but it was true. He had been gone for a long, long time. This is not my home. How can I ever feel at home here?

The sea lion asked. You will, the tortoise said. In time. The tortoise appeared to be squinting his eyes in a thin slit. I've seen the sea, and it's no better than what you have found here.

You've seen the sea? Yes. Come closer, whispered the tortoise, and I will tell you a secret. I am not a tortoise. I am a sea turtle.

But I left this sea of my own accord many years ago in search of better things. If you stay with me, I will tell you stories of my adventures. The stories of the ancient tortoise were enchanting and soon cast their spell upon the sea lion. As weeks passed into months, his memory of the sea faded. The desert whispered, the tortoise is all that is or was or will ever be.

And when the sun grew fierce and burned his skin, the sea lion would hide the shade of the tree, listening to the tales woven by the tortoise. And when the dry winds cracked his flippers and filled his eyes with dust, the sea and lion would retreat to the water hole. And so the sea lion remained, living his days between water hole and tree. The sea no longer filled his dreams. It was that May that the winds began to blow.

The sea lion had grown used to the wind, and at first he did not pay much heed at all. Years of desert life had taught him to turn his back in the direction from which the wind came and cover his eyes with his flippers. So the Dust could not get in. Eventually, the winds would always pass. But not this time.

Day and night, it came howling across the barren lands. There was nothing to stop its fury, nothing to even slow it down. For 40 days and 40 nights, the wind blew. And then, just as suddenly, it began. It stopped.

The sea lion lifted himself to have a look around. He could hardly believe his eyes. Every single leaf had been stripped from the tree. The branches that had remained with only a twig or two upon them looked like an old scarecrow. And I don't need to tell you, there was no longer any shade which to hide.

But worse than this, much worse indeed, was what the sea lion saw next. The water hole was completely dry. Three weeks after the wind ceased to blow, the sea lion had a dream. Now, as I told you before, there were nights in which he dreamed of the sea. But those were long ago and nearly forgotten.

Even still, the ocean that filled his dreams that night was so

beautiful and clear, so vast and deep. It was asked if he was seeing it for the first time. The sunlight glittered on its surface and he dived. The waters all around him shone like an emerald. If he swam quite deep, he turned so jade, cool, dark and mysterious.

But he was never frightened, not at all. For I must tell you that in this dream, in all of his dreams of the sea, he had never before and found himself in the company of other sea lions. This night, this dream, there were many round about him, diving and turning, spinning and twirling. They were playing. Oh, how he hated to wake up from that wonderful dream.

The tears running down his face were the first wet thing he felt in three weeks. But he did not pause even to wipe them away. He did not pause, in fact, for anything at all. He set his face to the east and began to walk the best the sea lion can. Where are you going?

Asked the tortoise. I'm going to find the sea.

I love that story. Cause when I first read that story, it stirred in me the sense of, I'm not going to settle for where I am now. I'm not going to settle for low levels of hope. I'm not going to settle for low levels of expectation of what Jesus can do in my life. And sometimes we do.

There are times in my life where I was settling for a small water hole and the small shade tree and calling it like the ocean. Because sometimes I thought, Christianity, there has to be more to it than this. So when Jesus is asking this man, do you want to get well? He was getting into that deep place of desire. That place of, no, I'm not going to be content with just a small version of Christianity.

I'm going to seek out what it means to really follow Jesus, to be healed and be full of the Holy Spirit. So that's what he did, you know, do you want to get well? Do you want to get well? Place of desire. But now we're going to look at do you want to get well?

I mean, Jesus is asking this man, again, it's an odd question, but let's just build on the so get well. The word get well could also mean be healed, be restored, be whole. So Jesus is asking that man, he's asking you, he's asking me, do you want to be whole? Do you want to have full peace, full joy, full life? That's what Jesus promises us.

Do you want that? Do you want change in your life? I have no idea of all the stories of all the lives I'm talking to right now. But I know my story. I know some of your stories.

And there's times, there's certain areas of our life, we want change. We don't want those habits or hangups or wounds or issues to be driving our lives anymore. We want to see change. We want to see

healing. We want to see Jesus bring healing and wholeness to those things.

And are you willing to search for that? So let me talk about the healing and wholeness again. So again we're talking about, do you want to get well? Do you want to be whole? Now, I'm going to introduce a word to you and the word is burge, and it stands for basking in reflected glory.

All right? It's actually a social identity theory that's researched and things like that. Basking in reflected glory. And you might think trying to figure out why I'm connecting this to the sermon, but let me just do this for a second, all right? IU national champs.

That's the only thing I'm going to do with that. But we're burging, all right? We're burging. That's what social identities say. We are basking in reflected glory.

Now what does that mean? Well, I don't know about you, but after Monday night, I felt good about myself. I felt my self esteem was better because we're made. We're made to be a part of something that gives us meaning, fullness, joy, identity, purpose. And we find that it's not wrong.

We find that in things like sports. I mean, if you were with me when I was in an assembly hall watching the game on Big Screen. I was woohooing with the best of them. I was yelling, I was screaming. There was something in my soul that was coming alive.

And that's not wrong, but I think I want you to. I'm going to challenge you to think this way. I think it's a shadow of how God made us. He made us to know. He made us to be a part of something bigger, to bask in some bigger glory that brings about change in our lives.

We settle for those small things. I mean, I love IU winning the football game, but I don't want to settle for that being my experience of identity and meaning and largeness in life. Because that ends, all right, IU won the football game, but didn't change my marriage, didn't change my financial situation, didn't change relationships with my kids. Didn't change anything in my life. But for a while, we'll take it.

But I want you to package that exhilaration you felt if you're an IU fan. If you didn't feel. If you're not an IU fan, then maybe you just need to turn off the TV right now. But if you're an IU fan, you know, the exhilaration we were feeling, you know, the sense of pride about who you are and a bigger identity. And you, if I can say this word, you felt like wholeness.

You felt well. Jesus asked this man, do you want to get well? And I

think if it's well with my soul. And if you were IU fan, you walked away from watching that game, and you're like, I feel well. And I want you to capture that feeling.

Feeling. Because that's exactly. It's a small pointer shadow to what Jesus wants to do in your life and my life. He wants to make us whole. He wants us to find.

He wants us to burge. Bask in reflected glory. Not an iu, not simply an IU football. Let that be appointed to basking in reflected glory from Jesus. Right?

Because in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, Jesus, the Scripture, even talks about that we can have this freedom. And it actually says, we reflect the glory of the Lord. Okay, there's. We're burging. We're basking in the reflected glory of Jesus.

And then the passage in 2nd Corinthians 3 talks about change as he's bringing about change in our life. So freedom and change. Get well. Do you want to get well? Do you want.

That's what Jesus is bringing you to. He's bringing you to that aliveness of soul that Exhilaration of soul, where you finally understand the greater sense of your meaning and your purpose and your identity. And it's not simply in sports teams, things like that. That's not bad. I'm not saying that's bad.

Let that be a pointer to the bigger reality that God wants for your life. So again, I'll end with that. I'll end with that question again. I'll bring it up again. Do you want to get well?

Do you want that to be who you are? Do you want that fullness of soul, that fullness of identity that you know who you are, you reflect the glory of Jesus, and he's going to change you from those issues in your life and my life. So at the very end, I'll say this. Some of the real simple way to break it down is we say, I can't. All right?

I can't change. I'm like the sea lion. It's not as good as it's going to get. Or maybe in your issue, whether it's an addiction, whether it's a hurt or a hangup, you think, I've tried, like the man at the pool, I've tried. Can't get there.

Nobody's there to help me. I've tried. I've tried. It's not working. I'm going to settle for what it is.

This is as good as it gets. And I'm going to say to you, this coming to the point of I can't is actually a really good place. But you can't put a period there. It's, I can't. Jesus can.

Right? If you just say, I can't and stop there, I can't. Jesus can.

And I'm going to let go. I'm going to let Jesus bring change in my life.

I'm going to ask him. I'm going to invite him to bring change in my life. But getting to the place of I can't is actually a really good place. I can't manufacture change in my life. I can't.

Again, I shared my story before of years ago having some pornography addiction. I tried all kinds of things to break the addiction. I can't. I tried it and I thought, well, I'll just have to live with it. But then I got to the point where I said, no, I can't.

But now I know Jesus can. And I'm going to let him. All right, so let me just leave with this. Your story's not over yet. Your story with Jesus isn't over.

I don't care if you're 24, 44 or 64, like me, your story isn't over. Don't ever settle for a small water hole and the small shade tree that you think is Christianity, because there's way more than that. And Jesus comes right to that heart of our desire and asks you, do you want to get well? So let me pray for you, God.

I don't know the people who are watching this. I know some of them. But I do know this. Every one of us has a hunger and a thirst in our life that we know we were made for more. And we also have things that have crippled us, things we've done, things have been done to us, and we just don't know what to do with it.

And I'm going to just ask you, Holy Spirit, would you, even as people are sitting on their living room couches or driving in a car, whatever they're doing, would you stir in them this sense of, I'm going to find the sea, I'm going to go look for that. I'm going to get my. I'm going to find what Jesus can do in my life. So I'm going to ask that for you, for those who are listening Jesus and trust the power of your Holy Spirit to do so and ask this in your name. Amen.

So we always have a response time at Sherwood Oaks. Of course, you're not here, but I'm going to encourage you to respond. There's a couple different ways. One, we always do communion. Now, you know, we don't have.

You may have something at home. And if you want to use bread and juice or water to remember what Jesus has done for you. And I guess I'm going to ask one of us to remember, remember that he can change you. You can't. He can.

So let him. Right? That may be a response that you're new, but I'm also going to ask you if you want to respond, you just want prayer or you want to talk to somebody at Sherwood Oaks, you can email infoocc.org and say, I'd like to talk to somebody. And we'll get back

to you, I promise. Infosoc.org I'd like to talk to somebody.

I want to understand what it means that Jesus can do in my life. So if that's you, I'm going to encourage you to do that. We will respond to you. Have a great rest of the day. Have a safe and warm Sunday.

Thank you.