



## \* **“WHEN YOU’RE WEARY”**

**Biblical Text: Luke 5:17-26**

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**All week long, it’s been basketball, basketball, basketball – at least at my house.**

\*There were exciting games, like WSU’s victory over Dayton. *(Go Shocks!)* There were the #1 seeds who buried opponents in 100 point victories, like KU over UC Davis and North Carolina over Texas Southern. There were heartbreaking games, like \*Kansas State’s loss to Cincinnati, which left Wildcat fans like me tired and weary of losing.

**I know some of you are just not basketball fans.** I know that – I don’t understand that – but I know it. But here’s the thing. Every year one big lesson emerges from *“March Madness,”* whether you are a basketball fan or you couldn’t care less who wins or loses. The joy of victory quickly fades for almost every team.

Sixty-eight sets of hope and dreams becomes sixty-four, then thirty-two, then what’s called the *“sweet sixteen,” “elite eight,” “final four,”* until there is only one champion.

\*Only one winner emerges from all the hoops hoopla and sixty-seven teams and coaches, seniors playing their last game ever, and sets of fans leave feeling tired, disappointed, and wondering if it is worth the effort and investment after all.

\*We can say, *“Well, it’s just a game.”* **But it doesn’t feel like it.** It’s never *“just a game,”* or *“only a broken arm”* or *“a little minor surgery”* or *“only politics”* or *“just a pet”* or *“at least they had a long life”* or *“you’re still young”* or *“there are people a lot worse off”* or any of the other platitudes that we offer up to try and help!

**None take the edge off our defeats or the weariness, trials or hurts of this life.**

When you’re hurting, you hurt. When grieving, you grieve. When you are exhausted with it all, you just are. And no amount of *“Don’t worry be Happy”* songs or well-meaning advice, like my mom’s cheery refrain, *\*“Turn that frown upside down!”* is going to provide relief. In those silent, suffering moments, we are just at the end.

And we’ve all been there. Who hasn’t prayed, in the worlds of the old hymn, *\*“Have thine own way, Lord”* - *“...wounded and weary, help me I pray...”*<sup>1</sup> But sometimes it even seems like God is silent, and our prayers are seemingly unanswered.

**It’s one of the subjects we’re addressing in our Lenten series, \**“In the Silence.”***

I also am convinced that’s exactly the circumstance that faced the \*paralyzed man that we meet in the fifth chapter of Luke’s Gospel this morning.

<sup>1</sup> From the hymn, *“Have Thine Own Way, Lord,”* lyrics by Adelaide A. Pollard, music by George C. Stebbins, first published in 1907.

\*It's not by accident that it is a favorite Gospel story that has been captured in the art of every age, and culture. \* Of all the stories in the Gospels of Jesus' healing ministry, and there are dozens, this one may be familiar.

\*Luke 5:17 tells us, *"...(people) had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal."*<sup>2</sup>

We have sometimes not paid enough attention to the healing dimension of the faith of Jesus. \*People were drawn to Jesus. I mean he was the Son of God. But one of the reasons was also human. Then, like now, in our most difficult moments, when we are weary, and at the end of our rope, we long for anything that will help.

And it's not always physical affliction. \*I know I am not the only one today weary and fatigued by the constant assault on the poor and others often left behind by political agendas I don't understand. I am clinging to Jesus words from Matthew 11:28, \**"Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

The unique circumstances of this story unfold in Luke 5:18: \**"Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat, and they tried to take him inside to see Jesus."*<sup>3</sup>

Nothing new there. People were always crowding around Jesus. But look at the lengths to which these friends were prepared to go on behalf of their friend! The picture becomes clearer in verse 19: \**"They could not get in because of the crowd, so they went on the roof and lowered him through it, right in front of Jesus."*<sup>4</sup>

In John's version of the healing of the paralyzed man, from John 5:6, it is an entirely different situation. In it, Jesus asked the man, \* *"Do you want to be made well?"*<sup>5</sup>

It is a worthy question. It has merit. All of us would benefit from recognizing the attitudes and priorities in ourselves that stand in the way of healing and wholeness.

\*But careful - leaning too much on that question can lead us into a theology that says if we are not healed, after praying earnestly, it is our fault for not having enough faith. Those who says so are guilty of inflicting more pain on those who are already suffering. Shame on them. You'll not find that in the Bible or in the heart of God.

Luke's words about what Jesus did in response to the man's needs are very different! Look at what it says in verse 20: \**"When he saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'"*<sup>6</sup> It was their faith – not the paralytic's, that brought Jesus' response!

<sup>2</sup> Op. Cit. Luke 5:17, *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 5:18, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, Copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007. Used by permission of Tyndale House. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 5:19, paraphrased by the author from English translations.

<sup>5</sup> John 5:6, *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>6</sup> Op. Cit. Luke 5:20, *New Revised Standard Version*.

It's the ultimate affirmation of the grace of God, which always brings hope and healing, not based on the strength of our faith, but on God's goodness!

\*But there is something more here. It is the power of the community of faith, our friends in Jesus' name, who often carry us when we grow weary and our own faith grows thin. It's what happens when the Church is at its best. We carry one another. You never really know how much it means, until you are the one being carried!

There's more in the text. In Luke 5:22, Jesus words addresses the Pharisee's skepticism about him and ours: \**"Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?"*<sup>7</sup>

And Luke 5:23 says *"Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'"*<sup>8</sup> \*Jesus meaning is clear. He is the source of healing for spiritual and physical affliction. Fine points of theology don't really mean so much when you are the one who is wounded or weary, do they? You simply yearn for help and hope.

Luke 5:24 ends with Jesus healing command to the paralyzed man. I always hear it in language of John 5:8, \**"Jesus said to him, 'Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.'"*<sup>9</sup>

You may not feel like you have much in common with the paralyzed man longing to be healed whose friends brought him to Jesus. But consider how often we are paralyzed by our fears, or confined by our worries. Consider how often we silently suffer through our hardest moments, without letting anyone know. Consider how often we are worn and weary with life and fail to ask anyone, even Jesus for help.

But every now and then we let down our guard. We allow our friends or members of our Church family to walk us through our weary moments or stand by us in our pain. And God's grace overwhelms us.

Luke 5:26 tells us all who were there on the day in question were amazed, rendered nearly speechless, astounded by the glory of God's healing power at work.

\*Eugene Peterson's, *The Message*, puts it this way, *"Awestruck, they said, 'We've never seen anything like that!'"*<sup>10</sup>

That's the way I feel every time I see a burden lifted, a relationship healed, the weary restored to strength or someone find rekindled hope. \*May it happen for someone, maybe for you, today. Let us pray.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Luke 5:22, *New Revised Standard Version*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Luke 5:22, *New Revised Standard Version*.

<sup>9</sup> John 5:8 (*parallel passage to Luke 5:24*) *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, Copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 5:26, *The Message (A Bible Paraphrase)*, Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson.