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IT'S MY TURN

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

The summer is very quickly coming to an end. Malls and department stores are packed with children eager to buy that new beginning-of-the-school-year outfit. But the adults remind them that paper, pencils, pens, crayons, and other school supplies have to be purchased as well. And even our church is preparing for the end of the summer. Stan with his anointed gifts will bless our church as he continues to minister to us with angelic music – especially through Praise Power and the Children Choir. The trustees will complete the final touches to the lift. Jane will do her administrative magic by preparing the church for our charge conference. And Jenny will return to direct the angelic voices of the choir. Each of us moves forward into our new season.

John 5:1-5 speaks of the man at the pool of Bethesda.

5After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. 3In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” 7The sick man answered him, “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 steps down ahead of me.” 8Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” 9At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

But there are many today right here in our church family who can relate to the struggles of this physically challenged man. Like this man at the pool of Bethesda, you've been overlooked, crowded out, passed over, outrun and pushed out. Yet you're still ready and waiting for your turn to get into that life-changing pool.

You've been like this man, you've been looking at it, dreaming about it, talking about it, and singing about it: One day I will see that ripple in the pool and it will be my turn to be blessed.

I can imagine this man staring at the water, watching for the slightest ripple, saying to himself - don't miss it this time. For hours and days and weeks, months, and

years he watches the water, then for a minute he dozes off or something catches his attention, and he misses it.

Shouts ring out as a once lame man cries out, “I can walk! I can walk!” His heart sinks as he realizes he missed it again, somebody got ahead of him yet again. I’m talking to someone today who has watched other people get blessed, get healed, get promoted, get their new car. And it looks to you from all natural evidence that it will never be you. But the Lord said to tell you, it’s coming. Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not.

God needs us to take the limits off him; don’t restrict God to past methods or past experiences or past manifestations. He says: Behold I will do a new thing; old things have passed away.

For years the sick, the afflicted, the feeble would come to this pool and wait for a move of the water, but on this particular day God chose to move in a new way.

Jesus stood in front of this man. Jesus who is the Word. Jesus who is health and healing; Jesus who is blessing and prosperity. Jesus who is the full manifestation of everything this man had ever dreamed of is standing right in front him. Jesus who is the Good News.

Yet this man had his mind on the pool. For you see the man believed that a miracle would happen for him, but he could not see beyond the past – his miracle would only occur if he got into the pool. But thanks be to God, God is bigger than that. Yes God's spirit was in the pool, but the pool was not God.

God is bigger. For one blind man he touched his eyes and said according to your faith be it unto you. For another blind man Jesus spat in the dirt and made mud and rubbed it on his eyes.

This man almost missed his miracle because his faith was still attached to the pool; he was expecting his miracle to come in the water. He almost missed his miracle because it didn’t come in the way he expected it.

When you need a miracle from God you, have to give God the latitude to use whatever means he desires to get it to you. You may have to let go of people, circumstances or even financial security for God to move in a glorious way in your life. If you are not careful, you can miss the glory, the blessing, the miracle you need simply because it doesn’t come in the package you expected.

Many times it's not Satan that keeps us from receiving our miracle; it's narrow minded religious attitudes that try to tell God how to do his business. Bless me God, and here's how I want it and when I want it.

This man almost missed the person with his blessing because he was still attached to the pool. His breakthrough had come, but it didn't come the way he expected it, and he almost missed it.

He was so locked in to the experiences of the past that he thought the only way he could get his breakthrough and his miracle was to get in the crowd and push and kick and crawl and cry and fight and work his way into the pool.

He could not fathom that it be as simple as just receiving.

Your miracle, yes, your blessing and your breakthrough is here, and it's not in the pool. It's in the person, and it's not in your works; it's in your faith. Faith without works is dead. But you can wear yourself out trying to work your way into a blessing or a miracle. You can wear yourself out trying to make things happen, trying to get people to recognize you, trying to open doors for yourself, trying to get a platform for your gift. Trying to convince God that you deserve a blessing, that you deserve a breakthrough, that you deserve a promotion.

Yes, faith has works, but faith culminates not in (trying) but in (trusting). Not in (wrestling) but in (nestling). Someone here today needs to quit wrestling with God, and start nestling with God. Snuggle deep within the peace and comfort that only your heavenly Father can provide.

I want to encourage each of us today not to shut down or turn off the switch of faith. It is worth it to hold on a little bit longer – “the race is not won by the swift but by those that endure until the end.” Somebody's dream is frail and fragile, and you're about to give up; you've been in the fight of your life, and you just don't feel like you've got any fight left.

But praise be to a loving God - Hold on, yes hold on just a little while longer - faith never quits. The difference between success and failure is just getting up one more time than you fall.

Faith never quits, (your money may run out, your feelings may get stepped on, your friends may run out). But your faith will carry you through. Never give up,

never quit. You never know when the breakthrough is coming; you never know when the manifestation will come. You never know when the door will fly open, or when the power of God will show up on your behalf and turn the whole thing around.

One of the main ingredients of this man's miracle was his persistence, even though he had missed his miracle time and time again, and he had watched other people get in the water ahead of him, he kept coming. He had something the old folks called (gumption); it's kind of an old fashioned way of saying (grit) or (guts) or backbone.

Gumption is a good thing to have, It will get you up and get you moving, it's the kind of thing that is a part of your character that won't let you just lay around and be lazy and feel sorry for yourself. Gumption made him keep coming, it made him press through his pain, press through his disappointment and discouragement.

Everybody needs some gumption, but gumption alone is not enough. It's one thing to have gumption; it's another thing to have unction. Uction is another word for the anointing. **Acts 1:8** Jesus said: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

When gumption and unction come together, you've got some power to function.

He had been a long time in that case, but he never gave up. This man worked up as many of us do – same old thing – oatmeal breakfast, coffee, orange juice, some medication to see us through the day. Same dull routine. But church of a living God, this is not the same day – this is a brand new day that God has allowed you to see and be blessed with new grace and mercy. And you do not know, today could be your day for a miracle.

Now was this man just a random choice? No: Jesus came to him because according to this man's own words - he kept coming; he may have been outrun, he may have been run over, he may have been crowded out, but his persistence kept him coming, and his persistence got God's attention.

He kept coming; he kept coming through his pain, through his discouragement. Let me make it a little plainer - he kept coming through his divorce, through his bankruptcy, through his confusion, through his loss of employment, through his betrayal, through the loss of a loved one, through his rejection, he just kept

coming.

I'm wounded, but I'm coming. I'm hurting, but I'm coming. I'm confused, but I'm coming. I'm battling depression, but I'm coming. I'm dragging my leg, but I'm coming. I may even have to crawl, but I'm coming.

I had to encourage my Mother this past week to keep coming and to hold on. These past months have been trying and have left her wanting for release from her pain and suffering. She honestly doesn't feel like moving. It's a challenge to breathe, to do physical therapy, to have lost the ability to do her own personal hygiene. But I know that if she won't keep moving, she'll die. I told her to pray and ask God to keep moving her in the direction of her miracle, be like the woman with the issue of blood - if I can only touch the hem of his garment, I will be healed. She did not have to physically touch Jesus, but when she touched the hem of his garment, Jesus knew in the midst of all those people, someone had TOUCHED him.

Just keep moving. Movement is a sign you're still alive. If you can't move your legs, move your arms. If you can't move your arms, move your head. If you can't move your head, wiggle your toes. And if you can't wiggle your toes, stick out your tongue. Just do something to tell Satan you're still here and you're alive and you're still moving.

God is God, the same God yesterday, today and tomorrow. Yet God does not always do things the same way. God can change the procedure anytime. All of these people were gathered around the pool waiting for their turn. They were following the same routine - waiting for the ripple of the water. But Jesus completely bypasses the pool procedure and comes to this man.

Somebody's getting ready to experience some divine favor. Favor isn't fair. Favor can do for you what no amount of education can do. Favor can open doors, favor will elevate you, and favor will change people's minds about you. Favor will cause money to come to you. Favor is a magnet that draws the blessings of God to your life. Favor will cause people to bless you that don't even like you. Favor will put you in the front of the line, when others are more qualified, and when others have been there longer.

Favor took Ester from a humble peasant girl to the queen of a nation. Favor took Joseph from the pit to the palace. Favor can completely reverse situations. Jesus said to the man, "Rise take up thy bed and walk," and IMMEDIATELY without hesitation or delay, he was made whole.

Is there anybody who has some immediate faith? Some right-now faith? Not when I get to heaven, not one of these days, not 6 months from now, or 2 weeks from now, but right now. You may be in a midnight hour; it may be the darkest hour of your life. But no matter how bad it is, how dark it is, midnight is gone in 60 seconds. Weeping may endure for the night, but Joy comes in the morning.

Somebody said: when is it going to be my turn? The line is so long, and I'm so far back I don't know if I'll ever reach the place of blessing, the place of promotion, the place of healing, the place of breakthrough, the place of miracles. Believe and know that in due season – your blessing will come.

There's something about God that when it's your turn, it doesn't matter where you're standing in line. It doesn't matter where you're at education-wise, and it doesn't matter where you're at socially, or economically. God gets pleasure out of taking the little things, and using them in big ways.

The bible says: **2Corinthians 4:7** - *But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.*

When it's your season you move to the front of the line, when it's your turn, you can only receive your blessings.

A multitude was waiting for the moving of the water, but his miracle came to him, his blessing found him. The Holy Spirit said: It's your turn, you will go from obscurity and insignificance to the person of interest and the center of attention.

When it's your turn, God is going to bless you, and he is going to do it in such a way that you will be an example of God's goodness and faithfulness. He's going to raise you up, and he's not going to do it in the closet. He's going to anoint you in the midst of your sisters and brothers because God is not ashamed of his anointed ones.

I believe someone is coming into their anointing right now, something you have been waiting for and pressing for and struggling for, is getting ready to come to you. God said: I've been watching you, and you may have been overlooked by others, and you may have been left out by others. But you're my choice, and it's your turn now.

Many people are good starters but poor finishers. When the going starts getting tough, they listen to the little imp on their shoulder that whispers, "You can't do it" and "You'll never make it." Many others do not even start. What we must realize is that while doing something requires a risk, so does doing nothing. The risk of action may be failure, but the risks of a failure to act can be stagnation, dissatisfaction and frustration. Strength does not refer only to physical strength. True strength flows from a strong spirit, a spirit made powerful by a close relationship with God. God gives us the will to succeed, the dreams that will not die and the wisdom to turn any evil into a blessing. Lean on God for direction, and keep leaning on Him for the wisdom and courage to finish what you begin!

*This one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before. **Philippians 3:13***

Ivern Ball, author and motivator said, "The past should be a springboard, not a Hammock."

Past achievements or disappointments need to be remembered and honored, but they also need to be released. Sometimes, we hold on so tightly to a past success or failures that we stall our progress in the moment. Grasp the coin that has been left on your pew. Hold it tight – now tighter. This coin represents your last promotion, the time you did something for a friend or you chaired a committee. Or any successful achievement in your life that you have held onto as your justification that "I did do something successful one time in my life." Or it could be that struggle in your life - a friend that hurt your feelings; the spouse that just doesn't listen; the children that are challenging your patience; your money that always seems to disappear before you have it – or any of a hundred thousand past situations or circumstances that you just hold on to and will not let go. Now, while holding on tightly to that past success or disappointment, pick up your Bible with that same hand. The Bible - the Good News that says all things are new in Christ. Each day God gives new grace and mercies. The Word that says each of us are forgiven. But holding onto that past achievement or disappointment, we cannot pick up the Bible, not until we let go of our grip on past achievements or disappointment.

You can never fully enjoy today while dwelling on past successes or disappointments. People never succeed while resting comfortably on their laurels. As Sir William Osler said, "Live neither in the past nor in the future, but let each day's work absorb entire energies, and satisfy your widest ambition."

Past success or disappointments could be a comfortable hammock upon which we may be tempted to rest, rather than a springboard launching us to the next level. The Lay Committee begins our exciting time of acknowledging the gifts of our church and asking each of you to utilize your gifts on one of our leadership committees – launch into a new season of your spiritual life and service to God and your church. And some may need to realize that they may need to let go of past successes in a ministry and allow the Holy Spirit to direct them into new and exciting ministries.

Loosen your grip on past successes, achievements hurts or disappointments in order to free the awesome fruit-filled future God has planned for YOU? After all, the future, not the past, is where the rest of your life will be lived.

Like you, I want to make the most of every day. And, like most people, I've long believed that the best way to do that is to let go of the past.

It's YOUR turn now to shine, It's your turn now to prosper, it's your turn now to be healed. It's your turn now for doors to open for you. It's your turn now for a fresh and increased anointing.

Tell your pew neighbor: Don't be angry with me, but it's my turn now. Amen. Amen. Amen.