**REFLECTION FOR TUESDAY, FOURTH WEEK OF LENT**

**READINGS: EZ 47:1-10, 12. John 5:1-16**

One of my classmates waged a mostly losing battle with alcohol for many years. His addiction cost him his marriage, his career, and his physical health. He had, on the surface, done all the right things to fight the addiction. He had read widely on the subject of addiction and sought help from countless counsellors. But still…he kept drinking.

He kept drinking until one year, when another friend asked him a very direct question. He asked, “Do you want to be sober?”

At first, my friend reacted with anger. “Do I want to be sober? What kind of question is that? I’ve spent a lot of money on treatment! I’ve spent years in therapy. I’ve lost my wife, my children, and my job to alcohol. Why would you ask me that?”

The other man simply repeated the question: “But…do you want to be sober?” And this became a moment of revelation, because my friend realized, for the first time in his life, that the answer was, “No.”

He liked alcohol – or, at least, he believed that alcohol was doing something necessary in his life. This addiction had become so much a part of his life that he could not imagine what his life would be like without it. And, most importantly, alcohol was what he was using to hide deeper pains – pains he simply did not want to deal with.

So, for the first time in his life, he realized the truth. Up to this point, he had not wanted to be sober. And when he realized this, it became the moment that his real healing could begin.

Jesus asks a straightforward question in today’s Gospel. At first, Jesus’ question may sound odd. Jesus meets a man who has been lying near the healing pool of Bethesda… for a very long time. The Gospel tells us that he has been sick for 38 years! And, apparently, he has been coming to the healing pool for a very long time.

Jesus sees him and simply asks, “Do you want to be well?” And notice, the man does not give Jesus a straightforward yes or no answer. Instead, he gives Jesus a list of reasons why, up to this point, he could never get to the healing pool on time.

If l were Jesus, may be l would have reacted to the sick man, “Are you kidding? You’ve been sick for 38 years, you’ve been coming to this healing pool for a long time, and you STILL haven’t figured out how to get to the front of the line?

But thank goodness that this crippled man is now face to face, not with me, but with Jesus – Jesus who sees beyond our excuses to the deep truths of our hearts. Before this man is able to say anything else, Jesus says the word that brings hope and healing.

Christ is in our midst this Lent. Yes, Christ is in our midst in this, the strangest Lent we’ve ever experienced. And even though there are so many strange things going on in our world right now, Christ is still standing before us, asking us to be honest as we answer his straightforward question: “Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be well?”

At first, that may sound like a silly question to us. We can’t turn on the news without hearing about sickness. We are changing our daily routine in radical ways in order to avoid a virus. We are spending lots of time inside to preserve our health. “Do people want to be well? Does the world want to be healed? Of course, we want to be well, we all want to stay well, and our world needs healing now, more than ever.

And if we are speaking to Jesus about a virus and a scary infection right now, of course, the answer is straightforward. We all want to stay well.

But the Gospel question may go even deeper than that. Jesus still asks, “Do you want to be well?” “Of course, I do.” But do I?

I ‘pray’ - “Lord, heal me of my lack of forgiveness.” But do I REALLY want to forgive? Or do I LIKE being angry, holding on to that grudge?

I ‘pray’ - “Lord, heal me of my impatience.” But do I REALLY want to be patient, or do I use that constant swirl of emotions to ignore deeper truths?

We ‘pray’ - “Lord, make me whole.” But do we really want that, or have we settled for less, afraid of what might happen if we truly listen to God and take Christ seriously?

The Lord is able to do all things, in us, and for us. Perhaps, on this Tuesday of this very strange Lent, we need to ponder the question Jesus asks: “Do you want to be well?” Do you want the power of God unleashed in your life?

**May God heal the sick and heal our broken world with the living water of His grace. Amen**

**Fr Patrick**