

INTRODUCTION 引言

“Out with the old, in with the new,” so goes the saying. A new year is a new beginning. But switching from old to new can be a challenge. I remember an interesting story about my father-in-law. Once he came to the U.S. to see his daughters. Someone at the airport suggested to push him on a wheelchair. He was reluctant because he felt shameful of how people looked at him. Before long, he realized that the new way gave him some advantage. He zipped through the crowd without walking. He was also given a priority boarding privilege. He felt like a VIP. Since then, he always asked for the service at the airport. In our passage today, Jesus offered a patient an opportunity for a change. Jesus then performed a miracle to heal the man. Jesus is willing to minister His grace in us too. You may have some new plans in the new year. Perhaps it has to do your health, finance, career or relationship. Your new year resolutions can often turn into new year frustration. Your efforts do not last long. Very soon you are back to where you were. We need help from our Lord just like the man in the story did. Jesus does not only give us the power to change but He also gives us the will to obey Him.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Waiting for a Chance 等待運氣

The story tells us that many patients went to the pool of Bethesda because they were waiting for a chance. The name Bethesda means the house of mercy. Those people longed for healing mercy. Verse 3 tells us their physical conditions: **In these lay a multitude of invalids – blind, lame, and paralyzed.** We call them disabled people. At that time there was no social benefit or charity. People who could not see or walk must depend on the mercy of others. Many of them begged for a living. Why did they gather around the pool? There is a verse 4 in the footnote of most Bible translations: **waiting for the moving of the water; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had.** This verse is not found in some ancient Bible manuscripts. But it helps explain why those disabled people went to the pool. They were waiting for a chance. The description about an angel stirring the water may only be a legend. Perhaps spring water feeding into the chambers caused occasional disturbance. Then a myth about the healing power of the water was created. Those patients had no other hope to hang on to anyway. Why not take their chance and believe in some magic water? It is quite common for people to resort to superstition for things they cannot explain. Once in a while you hear in the news about an image of Jesus or Mary appears on the wall of a building. People will rush to the scene to see it or even touch it, thinking that it may bring them good luck. Many people would rather believe in fate than to have faith in God. They think by doing certain things and avoid doing other things will lead to favorable outcomes. The problem is, the more they want to control their destiny, the more they are controlled by those rules and taboos. There is anxiety that bad things may happen if they offend certain deities. Our life is in God’s hand. He directs our future. Once a Christian went with her good friend to a temple to consult a fortune-teller. The friend was not a believer. The medium talked on and on about the future career, marriage and fortune of the lady. He

advised her what she should and should not do. After he was done, the believer asked him out of curiosity: “Master, what about me?” The seer looked at her for a few seconds, then he said: “You will be successful if you concentrate on your religion.” All he knew was that she is a Christian. He could not see her future because it is in God’s hand. The Bible clearly forbids us to seek advice from a fortune-teller. Do not even try it! Brothers and sisters: are you being held in bondage by superstition? Do you wait for a chance in lucky numbers when you buy a house or get a new phone number? Does it bother you if the license plate on your car displays an unlucky message? Have you cut the ties with your previous religious beliefs? Any religious lucky charm, book or decoration will stumble your faith in Jesus. Do not leave a foothold for Satan to snare you! God has all the power in the universe. He invites us to trust Him and not to believe in chance. He is the ultimate source of our blessings.

2. Wanting of a Change 渴望改變

Among the crowd, a paralyzed man was also waiting by the pool for his chance. Jesus walked to the man and asked if he wanted a change in his situation. Look at verse 6: **When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”** What kind of question was that? If I were him, I would have responded: “Of course, I want to get well. Otherwise, why do I bother my friends to carry me here every day?” We can sense a trace of helplessness in his reply in verse 7: **The 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 going another steps down before me.”** He wanted a change, but he did not get it. He put the blame on other people and on the circumstances. Have you met people like that? They have good ideas but they do not take any action. They complain all day that they do not meet the right people or they miss their opportunities. They want a change, but they are not ready to accept the change. What if this paralyzed man could walk again? First, he would need to practice walking to develop stronger muscle. Second, he could no longer depend on his friends. He had to stop begging and find a job too. Change is hard when you are so used to the routine. It is comfortable to remain as you are because everything is predictable and controllable. We need Jesus to kick us out of our comfort zone. Continue to read verse 8-9: **8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked...** Put yourself in the shoes of the patient. His leg muscle must have shrunk for not being used so long. He did not have the strength to stand up, let alone to walk! However, there was only one way to find out whether or not Jesus had healed him. He followed Jesus’ instructions and he got well instantly. Jesus did not only supply the physical power to cure the man. He also gave the patient will power to step out. Jesus is asking us the same question today: “Do you want to get well?” It may be a chronic illness, a personality flaw, a bad habit or even a sin. Stop making excuse that you cannot help it. Stop putting it off until next month or next year. Ask God to help you overcome your stubbornness, laziness or even sinfulness now. This is not positive thinking or a prosperity theology. Everything you ask for must be consistent with God’s general will in the Bible. God will not raise your height by five inches, help you shed twenty pounds or give you a million dollars if those matters are not in His plan. The change you are hoping for must bring glory to God. For example, you want a better health so that you will have more energy to serve God. You plan to go to bed sooner so that you can rise up earlier to read the Bible. You hope for a promotion at work because you desire to increase financial support to Christian ministries. Better control over your temper will enable you to reach out to gospel friends more effectively. God is

delighted to bless us if our ultimate goal is to enlarge His Kingdom. Therefore, if you are fed up with your problems, it is time to get up, pick up from where you fall and step up!

3. Warning about a Charge 嚴厲警告

Jesus' miracle healing upset the religious leaders. They blamed Jesus for encouraging the patient to violate the Sabbath rules. But Jesus taught them that it was appropriate to show mercy to the needy on the Sabbath. Our focus today is on the interaction between Jesus and the patient. Jesus went back to look for the man later. He gave the healed man a stern warning about a possible charge. Let us read from verse 14-15: **14 ... "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."** **15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.** The man's physical condition was restored. But Jesus cautioned him about his spiritual condition. At that time, the Jews believed that all sickness were results of sins. Jesus corrected that misconception when He healed a man born blind on another occasion. Listen to a conversation in John 9:2-3 – **2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"** **3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.** Jesus used the miracle healing as an object-lesson. Jesus used physical blindness as an analogy to convict the religious leaders of their spiritual blindness. They knew that Jesus was the Son of God but they rejected Him. Based on the two passages, we can conclude that some but not all diseases are results of sins. Therefore, when we are sick and we know that we sin, then we should confess it to God besides consulting a doctor. In the story, Jesus warned the man not to sin anymore, lest something more serious might happen to him. It could be an even worse ailment or God's eternal judgment. The man did not seem to take heed of Jesus' words. In fact, we do not see any evidence of a changed heart. He did not even thank Jesus for curing him. He did not ask why Jesus had healing power either. Worse still, he informed the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well. In doing so, he blamed Jesus for causing him to break the Sabbath rule. We should give thanks to God when we experience His grace. A handyman, a mechanic or your friends deserve credit for helping you. But you should give the ultimate glory to God. Very often, we realize how vulnerable we are when we face a minor problem. A small cold forces us to slow down and get more rest. We will have a lot of time to think when we are too weak to do things. We admit that we are not invincible. We seek help from family members or experts. But most importantly, a disease should humble us and make us think of God. We need the diagnosis and treatment from an earthly doctor. We also need a prescription of grace from the Heavenly Physician. God has the healing power for all your problems.

結論 CONCLUSION

Jesus does not only give us the power to change but He also gives us the will to obey Him. On that day, Jesus ministered His grace at the house of mercy. Today, He invites you to come out from the hole of self-pith. He can make you whole. Jesus can give you a new beginning. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that: **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** Jesus gives you a new life the moment you receive Him into your heart. You will become a child of God. Jesus promised to be with you for the rest of your life. To our brothers and sisters: Jesus can change you to become a better follower. He can change our church to become a channel of His grace. We need to ask Him and obey Him.

INTRODUCTION 引言

俗話說：「送舊迎陳」。新的一年是新的開始。但是從舊到新的轉變可能是一個挑戰。我記得關於我岳父的一個有趣的故事。有一次他來美國看他的女兒們。機場有人建議把他推在輪椅上。他不願意，因為他不希望人們用奇異的眼光看他。但是沒多久，他發現到新方式給了他一些好處。他不用走路就可以穿過人群。他還獲得優先登機的權利。他感覺自己像個貴賓。從此之後，他每次到機場都要求同樣的服務。在我們今天的經文中，耶穌給一個病人改變的機會，然後耶穌行神蹟醫治那個人。耶穌也願意賜恩典給我們。也許你在新的一年裡有一些新計劃。可能是關於你的健康、財務、事業或人際關係。然而，新年的展望往往會變成新年的挫敗感。你的努力維持不了太久，很快你就會回到原來的光景。就像故事中的那個人一樣，我們需要主的幫助。耶穌不僅給了我們改變的力量，祂還給了我們順服祂的意願。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Waiting for a Chance 等待運氣

這個故事告訴我們，那時許多病人去畢士大池等待運氣。畢士大這個名字的意思是慈悲之家。那些人渴望醫治的憐憫。第 3 節告訴我們他們的身體狀況：**裏面躺着瞎眼的、癱腿的、血氣枯乾的許多病人**。我們稱他們為殘疾人仕。那時沒有社會福利或慈善機構。看不見或無法走路的人只能靠別人的憐憫。他們中的許多人都唯有靠討飯生活。他們為什麼聚集在水池周圍呢？大多數聖經的腳註中都有第 4 節：**等候水動；4 因為有天使按時下池子攪動那水，水動之後，誰先下去，無論害什麼病就痊愈了**。這節經文在一些古代聖經手抄本中是找不到的。但它有助於解釋為什麼那些殘疾人仕去水池那邊。他們在等待運氣。關於天使攪動水的描述可能只是一個傳說。也許泉水的流入會引起偶爾的波動。然後有人便編出關於水的治療能力的神話。反正那些病人也沒有其他希望，為什麼不碰碰運氣相信一些神奇的水呢？人們常常把他們無法解釋的事情訴諸迷信。偶爾你會在新聞中聽到耶穌或馬利亞的形像出現在某些建築物的牆上。人們會爭先恐後地去看，甚至去摸它，希望它能給他們帶來好運。許多人寧願相信命運，也不願相信神。他們認為做某些事情和避免做一些事情會導致有利的結果。問題是，他們越是想掌握自己的命運，就越是被那些規矩和禁忌所控制。他們生怕冒犯了某些神靈，就會引起不吉利的結果。我們的生命是掌握在神的手中。祂指引我們的未來。有一次，一個基督徒陪她的好朋友去寺廟算命。那位朋友不是信徒。那個靈媒一直談論那位女士未來的事業、婚姻和財富。他建議她應該做什麼，不應該做什麼。說完之後，那位基督徒好奇地問他：「師父，那我呢？」那個人看了她幾秒鐘，然後說：「如果你專注於妳的宗教，妳就會成功。」他只知道那個女士是個基督徒。他看不到她的未來，因為它掌握在神的手中。聖經明確禁止我們占卜算命。大家不要

嘗試！弟兄姐妹，你們有沒有被迷信捆綁呢？當你買房子或辦新電話號碼時，你是否盼望得到所謂幸運的數字？如果你的車牌顯示不吉利的信息，你會感到困擾嗎？你和你以前的宗教信仰斷絕關係了嗎？任何的護身符、書籍或裝飾品都會動搖你對耶穌的信心。不要給撒但留地步讓他絆倒你！神擁有宇宙中所有的力量。祂邀請我們相信祂，而不是相信運氣。祂是我們祝福的終極泉源。

2. Wanting of a Change 渴望改變

在人群中，有一個癱瘓的人也在池邊等待運氣。耶穌走到那個人身邊，問他是否想要改變他的處境。請看第 6 節：**耶穌看見他躺着，知道他病了許久，就問他說：「你要痊癒嗎？」**那是個什麼樣的問題？如果我是他，我會回答：「我當然想要痊癒。不然我天天勞煩朋友帶我來這裡幹什麼？」我們可以從他在第 7 節的回答中感受到一絲無奈：**病人回答說：「先生，水動的時候，沒有人把我放在池子裏；我正去的時候，就有別人比我先下去。」**他想要改變，但他辦不到。他把責任歸咎於其他人和環境。你遇到過這樣的人嗎？他們有好的計劃，但他們沒有採取任何行動。他們整天抱怨沒有遇到合適的人，或者錯過了機會。他們想要改變，但他們還沒有準備好接受改變。如果這個癱瘓的人能重新走路會怎樣？首先，他需要繼續練習走路來鍛煉肌肉。其次，他不能再依賴朋友了。他也不能再討飯，需要去找份工作。當你太習慣常規時，改變是困難的。維持現狀使人覺得很舒服，因為一切都是可以預測和掌控。我們需要耶穌將我們踢出舒適的區域。繼續看 8-9 節：**8 耶穌對他說：「起來，拿你的褥子走吧！」9 那人立刻痊癒，就拿起褥子來走了。**我們嘗試設身處地想他的處境。那麼久沒有走路，他的腿部肌肉肯定是畏縮了。他連站起來的力氣都沒有，更別說步行了！然而，只有一個方法證明耶穌是否醫治了他。他聽從了耶穌的指示，馬上就康復了。耶穌不僅提供了醫治這個人的能力，祂還給了他走出去的意志力。耶穌今天也在問我們同樣的問題：「你要痊癒嗎？」它可能是一種慢性疾病、一種性格的缺陷、一個壞習慣甚至是一項罪。不要再找藉口說你無能為力。不要再推遲到下個月或明年了。現在就求神幫助你克服你的頑固、懶惰甚至罪性。這不是正能量思考或是成功神學。你所求的事情必須符合神在聖經中的普遍旨意。如果一件事情不是在神的計劃之中，祂不會幫你實現的，例如你希望長高五英寸、減掉二十磅或是得到一百萬美元。你所盼望的改變必須能夠榮耀神。例如，你想要健康的身體，使你有更充沛的體力事奉神。你打算早點睡覺，這樣你就可以早點起來讀聖經。你渴望能夠升職，因為你希望增加對基督徒事工的奉獻。或是更好地控制自己的脾氣會讓你更有效地傳福音。如果我們的最終目標是擴展神的國度，祂會很樂意祝福我們。因此，如果你受夠了你的問題，是時候站起來了，從跌倒的地方爬起來，向前邁步！

3. Warning about a Charge 嚴厲警告

耶穌行神蹟醫治人使宗教領袖們不滿。他們指責耶穌鼓勵病人違反安息日的規定。但是耶穌教導他們，在安息日向有需要的人表示憐憫是恰當的。我們今天的重點是在耶穌與病人之間的互動。耶穌後來回去尋找那個人。祂嚴厲警告那個痊癒的人更可怕的

後果。讓我們讀 14-15 節：14 ... 「你已經痊癒了，不要再犯罪，恐怕你遭遇的更加利害。」15 那人就去告訴猶太人，使他痊癒的是耶穌。他身體的狀況得到了恢復。但耶穌警告他要注意他屬靈的狀況。那時，猶太人認為所有的疾病都是罪的結果。後來耶穌醫治了一個生來瞎眼的人，藉此糾正了這種誤解。請聽約翰福音 9:2-3 中的一段對話：2 門徒問耶穌說：「拉比，這人生來是瞎眼的，是誰犯了罪？是這人呢？是他父母呢？」3 耶穌回答說：「也不是這人犯了罪，也不是他父母犯了罪，是要在他身上顯出神的作為來。耶穌用神蹟醫治作為實物教材。耶穌用身體上的瞎眼作為類比，來責備宗教領袖屬靈上的瞎眼。他們知道耶穌是神的兒子，但他們拒絕了祂。根據這兩段經文，我們可以得出結論，不是所有的疾病都是罪的結果。所以，當我們生病時，如果我們知道自己犯了罪，除了看醫生，還應該向神認罪。在這個故事中，耶穌警告那個人不要再犯罪，免得更嚴重的事情會發生在他身上。所指的可能是更可怕的疾病或神永恆的審判。那人似乎沒有留意耶穌的話。事實上，我們沒有看到任何心意改變的證據。他甚至沒有感謝耶穌醫治了他。他也沒有問為什麼耶穌有醫治的能力。更糟糕的是，他告訴猶太人是耶穌使他痊癒的。他這樣做是要責怪耶穌讓他違反了安息日的規定。當我們經歷神的恩典時，我們應該感謝神。你應該感激一個裝修師傅、修車的技工或好朋友給你的幫助。但你更應該將最終的榮耀歸給神。很多時候，當我們遇到一個小問題時，我們才會意識到自己是多麼的脆弱。一次小感冒迫使我們放慢腳步，多休息。當我們沒有力氣做事時，我們會有很多時間思考。我們明白自己並非刀槍不入。我們也需要家人或專家的幫助。但最重要的是，疾病應該使我們謙卑並使我們想到神。我們需要地上醫生的診斷和治療。我們更需要天上醫生的恩典處方。神有能力解決你所有的問題。

結論 CONCLUSION

耶穌不僅給了我們改變的力量，祂還給了我們順服祂的意願。那一天，耶穌在慈悲之家施予恩典。今天，祂邀請你從自憐的空洞中走出來。祂能使你得完全。耶穌可以給你一個新的開始。保羅在哥林多後書 5:17 中說：若有人在基督裏，他就是新造的人，舊事已過，都變成新的了。當你接受耶穌進入你的心中時，耶穌就會給你一個新的生命。你便成為神的兒女。耶穌應許在你的餘生中與你同在。至於我們的弟兄姐妹：耶穌能夠改變你成為更好的跟隨者。祂可以改變我們的教會，使之成為祂恩典的管道。我們需要求問祂並順服祂。