

**UMC Towanda**

**March 20, 2022**

**John 5:1–15**

**On New Opportunities**

**We never know what opportunities await us each day.**

**We can only determine whether we will be open to the *New Opportunities* God brings our way.**

**Jesus' question to the man is simple: "Do you desire to become whole?"**

*A. The Man's Situation, 1-5*

- A. Pool of Bethesda
- B. Surrounded by others discarded by the community
- C. Unable to participate in the Temple rituals

*B. Jesus' invitation, 6-9*

- A. Pool of Bethesda
- B. A kind of help the man wasn't seeking
- C. The opportunity to participate in the Temple rituals

*C. The Community's Response, 10-16*

- A. You "should" know what you can't do: i.e. carry your sleeping pallet today
- B. Who told you it was appropriate to carry your pallet?
- C. "We can't have people disrupting our established practices"

**Jesus' question to us is simple: "Do you desire to become whole?"**

*A. What is your Situation?*

- A. Are you an "insider" or an "outsider?"
- B. What solution are you using to resolve your despair?

*B. What is the Community's response?*

A. What expectations do we have about our life that the words of Jesus challenge?

B. Where is the focus of attention for this congregation?

A. *New Opportunities* OR

B. Forcing conformity to our long held practices

◆ Church conflict often arises when we confuse ministry principles and practices. Practices, or how we do ministry often changes. Principles, or why we do ministry doesn't. If our "**why**" isn't certain, then our "**how**" will always be conflicted.

◆ If biblical, theological, and doctrinal truths aren't the foundational principles for all church ministries, then protecting current practices often takes precedence.

◆ "Guarding ministry principles is biblical, but guarding ministry practices is often preferential."

◆ David Manner, 2/14/2022

*C. What should our testimony be?*

A. Jesus is the guy who made me whole (11, 15)

*D. What might lead us to remain broken ourselves?*

A. 6, 11-12 - We forget that God is in the business of making us **whole**

B. 8, 14 - In order to be **whole** we must follow God's instructions to us

**To be whole means we are fully functioning as part of God's People.**

**The Triune God is at work to bring broken people into wholeness.**

**How can we get out of the way so that God can work in others as well as in ourselves?**

## **Benediction**

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes! (Eph 3:20-21, The Message)