

Speaking to the soul



God's blessings

Inside [Jerusalem], near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. Crowds of sick

people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him: “Would you like to get well?” John 5:2-6

I loved spending time in Jerusalem, but it is often impossible to know exactly where the events we read about in the Gospels took place. However, we know where the pool of Bethesda is, and you can still see a part of it adjacent to St Anne’s Church near St Stephen’s Gate. The pool had a long reputation for being a place of healing, but Jesus met a man who had been ill for an extremely long time.

Jesus asked the man if he would like to get well. On first hearing, this might sound a rather callous question. Surely the answer was obvious. Who wouldn’t want to be healed if they had been sick for 38 years? It is, however, a profoundly caring and important question. No doubt the man’s sickness had become an integral part of his personality. For many years, I suffered with a very bad back, and the typical greeting I would receive during those years was: “Hi. How’s your back?” As soon as people saw me, they thought of my back, because it was such a major part of my identity for those years.

Jesus’ question showed a deep respect for the man. He needed to make the decision of whether or not he was willing for his life to be turned around. If he was healed, his life would be completely different from that day forward. The Lord still comes to us with that same question. He can give us his forgiveness, peace and joy, but he will ask us whether we want to receive them. Perhaps we are so used to living

with unforgiveness, tension and joylessness that we wouldn't cope with his gifts. I thank God that he doesn't steamroller his way into our lives but asks us if we want his help.

QUESTION

Would you like God to bless your life?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your sensitivity and grace. I ask you to come into my life afresh and give me your blessings. Amen

Photograph - Flowers. In St Colman's Parish Church, Dunmurry

