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Title: The Gospel According to Pixar: Up - Healing and a Whole Lot of Balloons

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Text: [John 5:1-8](#)

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[The Picture Album](#)



We are in a worship series called The Gospel According to Pixar. We are looking at some of the Pixar movies to discover truths for today and to see the sacred, the holy in the everyday. The clip we watched was from the 2009 movie Up, which poses a fundamental question that is also posed throughout the Gospels

Do you want to be healed?

To say it another way, do you want to be made whole?

Think about that question for just a moment. On the surface, the answer seems obvious, it's yes. Yes, I want to be healed. Yes, I want to be made whole.

But think about it. Healing is messy work. Healing can be difficult work. To be made whole asks us to change.

To say yes to being healed is to take a risk. Carl, the main character in the movie, will be faced with this question. The movie revolves around Carl being faced with this question and then searching for the way he wants to answer this question.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks a man who is lying on the side of a pool this same question. "Do you want to be healed?"

As an aside, this piece of scripture we are about to hear is yet another example of where you will most likely find Jesus. A big festival is going on in Jerusalem, lots of important people in attendance, the movers and the shakers. And where do we find Jesus? Down by the pool, with those who were in need, with those who were ill. That's where you will find Jesus.

"After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethesda. It had five covered porches, and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there. A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I don't have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I'm trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me.'" (John 5:1-7 CEB)

Can you hear it? In a way, this man, who has only known this one station in life for so long, a station and place in life that he knows is not the life God intends for him, is offered the chance to be healed, to be made whole and well. He is offered a chance to move forward into God's future. And the answer is a resounding, "Not really"

Now, before we are too hard on this man, we are probably more like this man than we are willing to admit. To get up off our mats and follow Jesus into God's future, we become comfortable with our current station and our current view and so when God calls us forward, when God calls us to new life, we are too often more than willing to say, well, "not really" The old joke in the church is that the most famous words in the church are "we've never done it that way before."

Too often, we find it easier to lay on our mats, no matter how little life they give us than to get up and move into God's future.

The movie *Up* begins with some of the saddest 15 minutes of a movie that you will ever see. As the movie begins, we meet 78-year-old Carl Fredrickson, and we see scenes from his life with his beloved wife Ellie. Carl and Ellie share a beautiful life, Carl works as a balloon manufacturer and Ellie as a zookeeper. They are unable to have children of their own, so they see the children of the world as their children. One of their main dreams in life is to take a trip to Paradise Falls, and we see them saving money for this dream trip, but life happens. They have other, more pressing expenses they need to use their savings for, and this happens time after time. As they grow older, they finally have the means and the time to take the trip together, but before they can go, Ellie suddenly passes away.

As you can imagine, Carl is grieved and heartbroken. Carl decides that he is going to tie balloons, a lot of balloons, to his home and he is going to leave everything behind, he is going to fly in his house, by balloon, to Paradise

Falls. It's all he has. He ends up with an unintended passenger, a well-meaning boy named Russell. As they travel, they come to this sliding door moment. Russell wants to go one way to save a rare bird. Carl wants to save his house, not because he loves the house or that it is valuable, rather this is the house where he spent his life with Ellie. He believes that by holding on to his house, it will in some way keep him in a place where Ellie is physically with him. It is this grief, that Carl sends Russell on his way. Carl sits with his house.

This is the scene that we watched earlier. As Carl sits in his chair, desperately trying to save any tangible item of his former life, he comes face to face with his grief, pain, and brokenness.

Ellie, his beloved, made him a photo album, and Carl looks at it for the first time. At the end of this wonderful look at the life they shared, the album concludes with this note from Ellie

Thanks for the adventure. Now go have a new one. Love, Ellie

It can be easy for us to fall into the belief that there is no future.
It can be easy for us to believe that once one adventure ends, there are no other adventures to be lived.
It can be easy for us to simply lay on our mats and believe that this is all there is to life.

Carl Fredrickson believed there was no more to life. he believed his life was over.

The man lying by the pool at Bethesda for *thirty-eight* years believed that this was it. Until Jesus came along with a different story, with a different truth.

Thirty-eight years in the same condition and it's the Sabbath nonetheless, a day when healing was prevented. At this pool at Bethsaida begins to ripple, Jesus knows that now is the time to act.

"Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath." (John 5:8-9 CEB)

Pick up your mat and walk. Jesus releases this man from everything that is holding him back from God's future for him.

Thanks for the adventure. Now go have a new one. Ellie releases Carl from that which is holding him back from God's future for him.

The love that Jesus has for this man lying by the pool that he can help but heal him and release him from pain.

It's the same depth of love that Ellie has for Carl, a love that frees him to go find a new adventure, a new life.

As a pastor, one of the blessings and privileges is that people trust you with their story, with their struggles, with that which needs to be healed in our lives. One of the connecting tissues of humanity is that we all need to be healed from something. There are places in each of our lives and communities, and even the world where we wonder "is this it? Is this all there is?"

If we are being honest with ourselves, there are times when we are more afraid of the cure than we are of the illness. It's why this person has lain by this same pool for 38 years and when Jesus asks him if he wants to be well, he says "maybe." It's why Carl is more comfortable in his grief and the memories of his old life rather than wanting a new adventure.

Here's the thing: God is always moving forward. God is a future-oriented God. God is always pushing us forward into a future beyond our imagination. Making you whole is what God does, it is what Jesus does in his ministry.

If you know how Up ends, you will know that in helping Russell, Carl finds his new life. He is made whole.

And although we don't know what happens in the future to the man lying by the pool at Bethsaida, we do know that after laying for 38 years, he picks up his mat and walks away. Walks into God's future for him.

Know that you can do the same. Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be made whole? After all, it is what God does best. Get up, pick up your mat, and move into the future God has in store for you.

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