

Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, April 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.

Title: Beatitude 5—Making Changes (The Transformation Choice)

– The Road to Recovery Sermon Series

We continue our sermon series, “The Road to Recovery,” based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the eight sacred principles drawn from Jesus’ Beatitudes. Each Sunday, we reflect on one of Jesus’ Beatitudes alongside one or two A.A.’s steps and apply both to our lives from a spiritual perspective. As I have mentioned before, A.A.’s Twelve-Step program is an excellent resource—not only for those recovering from addiction, but also for anyone who desires to live a righteous and fulfilling life in the Lord.

This morning, we will explore the fifth Beatitude of Jesus in relation to the Transformation Choice as we seek change in our spiritual hearts. He says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthews 5:6). When God created human beings, He did so in two distinct ways (Genesis 2:7). First, God formed humanity from “the dust of the ground” as the most excellent part of His Creation. Second, He breathed “the breath of life” into them. In other words, as God’s living creatures, we require two kinds of nourishment: physical—our bodies, thoughts, and emotions—and spiritual—our souls and spirits. This helps us understand both physical and spiritual hunger and thirst.

One day, a Time magazine reporter asked one of the richest people in the world whether he felt blessed by his wealth... Many people in this world, including myself, despite experiencing great blessings, still want just a little more in order to feel fully happy. King Solomon confessed, “Meaningless! Meaningless!” after trying to find true fulfillment in pleasure, possession, power, and more. For centuries, people have sought satisfaction through these things. The Prophet Jeremiah compares unsatisfied hearts to “broken cisterns” that cannot hold water (Jeremiah 2:13). In this Beatitude, Jesus invites those who are thirsty to come to the waters and receive freely—without cost—rather than spending our money and labor on what is not true bread and what does not satisfy (Isaiah 55:1-3). The transformed, or renewed, choice is ours. When we hunger and thirst for God with all our whole being, He can and will fill our hearts with His righteousness even now. And He will not only allow us to enjoy His Kingdom in our hearts today, but will also lead us into His Promised Land—Heaven—when we are called to be with Him.

Over the past four Sundays, we have looked at the first five steps in the Twelve-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first principle of A.A. is honest admission. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—in other words, over our dependencies or spiritual bondage—and that our lives had become unmanageable. The second step is hope. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves—whom many call God—could restore us to sanity. The third step is faith. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. The fourth principle is inventory. We took a searching and fearless moral and spiritual inventory of ourselves. The fifth principle is confession. We admitted our wrongs to God, to ourselves, and to another trusted human being.

Today we will explore A.A.'s sixth and seventh steps and apply these principles to our spiritual journey. Step Six says, "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." I would call this "Willingness." Step Seven says, "We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." I would call this "Humility." These two steps mark a turning point in the recovery process, the next stage of spiritual recovery, which I like to call "Renovation". In our Scriptures today, the concept of renovation appears in various ways. After taking a sincere inventory of ourselves and confessing it to God, we must ask Him to remove all our defects. Since both steps focus on the removal of shortcomings, it is helpful to consider them together.

First of all, what is a defect? If we shop at stores, we often see clearance items marked as "defective." These products are sold at a lower price because they cannot be offered at full retail value. Some minor defects may not seem significant if the items still function as well as those in perfect condition—for example, books with slight wear, DVDs with cracked cases, or fruits with small bruises. However, in some cases, a tiny defect can have serious consequences.

Some time ago, a friend of mine noticed my van parked in the driveway and mentioned that the air pressure in some of the tires seemed low. Until he pointed it out, I had not given it any thought. I assumed everything was fine because I had recently installed a set of good used tires with decent rims. Later, I checked and discovered that one of the front tires was slowly leaking. I took the vehicle to an auto shop and asked them to inspect it. The mechanic told me that the tire itself was in good condition, but the rim was slightly bent, and air was escaping through a very tiny space. He ground down the uneven area and advised me to keep an eye on it. Since fixing the imperfect area in the rim, the tire has held air properly, and the vehicle now rides smoothly. If that small defect had gone unaddressed, not only would the tire have worn unevenly and quickly, but it could have caused serious safety issues down the road. In the same way, even small defects in our character can have serious consequences if they are left unchecked through the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul speaks to a similar idea in his epistle today, using language that echoes A.A.'s Sixth Step—referring to the "old self", which is "corrupted by deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). Our character is often revealed through our actions and in how others perceive us; we call this behaviour. If someone acts differently from what is expected, we might say they are "out of character." When I speak of character defects, I am not referring only to addictions or spiritual bondage. These defects are often connected to the challenges and struggles we face in life.

When I was a young boy, I remember my father struggling with alcohol use for a time. During that period, he was also dealing with a chronic illness. I believe he sought some temporary relief in ways that were readily available to him—a way to cope with his pain and manage his difficulties. Similarly, any imperfection in our character is often tied to the pressures, pains, and burdens we carry in daily life. Sometimes these dysfunctions are visible to everyone; at other times, they are perceived only by a few people close to us—or even only by ourselves.

As children of God, we are all called to be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Some may argue, "We are human; we cannot be faultless." In one sense, this is true—we are born with a sinful nature and cannot achieve perfection on our own. But we must also understand this: remaining in a state of defect or imperfection—whether small or great—is not how God wants us to live before Him. God calls us to "continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Some of you may be thinking, "I've been trying to follow these steps, but I do not see much change yet." My response is this: keep your eyes on "progress" not "perfection." The reason the Lord wants us to grow and mature in Jesus Christ is for our good and for our joy. If we ignore faults in our character, they can spread into other areas of our lives and hinder our spiritual journey. But God invites us to face these defects honestly, to allow Him to remove them, and to live in the freedom and fullness He desires for us.

Now, let us explore some practical action steps from A.A.'s Sixth and Seventh Principles. I would like to highlight four important points.

The first point is the subject of removing our defects. Often, we think we are solely responsible for our shortcomings or wrongdoings. Let me illustrate with a simple example: a person has a habit of staying up late watching TV. Even though that person has an important appointment the next morning, they stay up late, oversleep, and miss the appointment. They cannot justify themselves by blaming the habit—they must take responsibility. We need to be aware of the consequences of our behaviour. And if we are powerless over our spiritual bondage, we must be ready to rely on God—to allow Him to reign over our hearts and guide the matters of our lives. Otherwise, trying to control everything through our own willpower will only lead to frustration and imbalance.

Let me show you two images on the slide. In this slide, we see two circles, each with a chair inside. The circle symbolizes our life, and the chair represents our heart. In the first circle, we see ourselves sitting on the throne of the chair, while Jesus stands far away. Whether we realize it or not, this is a common image of our spiritual journey. It is like getting a ride from a friend who knows the route well, but constantly insisting on tell them how to drive because you think your way is better. Even though they are helping you, you still want to control the journey. In the second circle, Jesus is on the throne, and we lean on Him. This represents true surrender: allowing Him to lead and guide us fully. This is the essence of Step Six in spiritual recovery. Notice the wording: it does not say, "I am entirely ready to remove all my defects of character." Rather, it says: "I am entirely ready to have God remove all my defects of character." That distinction is critical. Our spiritual renovation is not something we accomplish on our own—it is governed and carried out by God. We surrender, we trust, and we allow Him to work in us, transforming us from the inside out.

The second thought on these Six and Seven Steps of spiritual renovation is the willingness. We all have areas in our lives we want to be healed or changed. Once again, each of us faces life issues—what A.A. calls "self-destructive patterns"—whether they are addictions, hang-ups, spiritual bondages, or strongholds. The key point is our willingness to be transformed.

In today's Gospel, Jesus visited a pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. A great number of sick people were there—hundreds of pitiful human beings lying around in various states of desperation. They all hoped to be the first to step into the pool, because on special occasions, the first person in the water would be healed. One of the people lying there had been ill for thirty-eight years. Jesus asked him, "Do you want to get well?" At first, this question seems obvious. Surely someone who had been sick for thirty-eight years would want to be healed. But perhaps this man had grown accustomed to his condition and no longer truly desired a cure. For thirty-eight years, his situation had not changed. During that long period, many things around him may have changed, yet his problem remained the same.

Is this situation similar to us? Or perhaps it reflects the struggles of someone we love—staying in the same condition for years, feeling powerless to change, even when help is available? One of the biggest lies Satan tells us is that our difficult situations will never change. He whispers, "This will always be your condition. You will never get well. Your loved one will never change." Doubt and discouragement try to stop us from even attempting to seek change. Sometimes we may look fine on the outside, but inside, we may be paralyzed in some way—just like this man with no hope. Whatever our shortcoming or disabilities may be, what truly matters is our willingness—our decision to say, "Yes, I want to be healed," because Jesus is here this morning, ready and willing to remove our spiritual bondage. Remember: Nothing is too difficult, too large, or impossible for the Lord our Christ.

The third thought I would like to mention is making a humble request to God. In today's Psalm, King David asked God to remove all of his defects. If we read Psalm 51 carefully, we see him crying out in heartfelt prayer, desperately asking God to remove all of his shortcomings. He repeatedly uses expressions that speak to the removal of his spiritual bondage: "blow out his transgressions", "wash away all his iniquity," "cleanse him from his sin," and so on. Some of us might wonder why David prayed this way. After all, he had committed serious sins. We are told that he committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for her husband, Uriah, to be killed in the battle (2 Samuel 11). Clearly, he had sinned greatly. Later, he repented and confessed his sins to the Prophet Nathan, who told him, "The Lord has taken away your sin" (2 Samuel 12:13-14).

Even after being forgiven, David continued to pray for cleaning and renewal. Why? It was not just because he had sinned repeatedly. I believe it was because he longed to live a wonderful and righteous life before God. His spiritual desire made him sensitive to the defects in his character. Without spiritual eyes and sensitivity, he might have ignored many issues in his life. Because he sought spiritual recovery and true renovation of his heart, he humbly asked God not only to remove his defects but also to create in him a pure heart. His persistence and desire for holiness earned him a remarkable description: he became known as "a man after God's own heart." What a wonderful compliment from the Lord?

The fourth and final point I would like to make is that God is the Wonderful Potter and the Master Craftsman, and we are the clay. This morning, we heard the Old Testament story that beautifully illustrates this relationship between the potter—God—and the clay—His people, or us. One day, the prophet Jeremiah was told to go down to the potter's house.

There, he saw the potter working at the wheel. For some reason, the pot the potter was shaping became flawed. So the potter remade it using the same clay, shaping it “as seemed best to him” (Jeremiah 18:4). Then Jeremiah heard the word of the Lord: “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does? Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.”

Wow! Consider this illustration in the context of our addictions, defects of character, or spiritual bondages. The key words in the Sixth and Seventh Steps of spiritual recovery are “remove the defects of character” and “ask God to remove our shortcomings.” As someone wisely said, “God does not want our defects merely improved—He wants them totally gone, removed.” How many times have we tried to fix our brokenness on our own? I am sure that many of us have felt discouraged by the results. Even if there is some improvement, the defect often remains, and the spiritual bondage continues to cripple us and negatively impact our journey with the Lord.

To conclude, as I was preparing this message, I was reminded of a well-known passage. The Apostle Paul declares our true identity: “We are God’s handiwork [masterpiece], created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). God is restoring us into His image through the spiritual recovery we have been walking together. And now, we find ourselves already past the halfway point of this series. The steps we have learned today are important to remember as we ask God to remove our shortcomings. We are now at a turning point in this recovery process.

Let us always remember that we are the clay, and God is the Potter. We need to humbly ask God—the Wonderful Creator and Renovator—to remove all our shortcomings, to renew us completely, and to remake us the original creation He intended from the beginning. Once again, remember: it does not matter how deeply these character defects have taken root in our lives, how many years we have struggled with spiritual bondage, or how impossible the situation may have seemed for a long time. What truly matters to God—and what He asks of us—is that we are willing and ready. In other words, we must humbly ask God to chisel away all our defects, trusting Him with expectant and willing hearts. Let us pray that God, who created the whole universe by His mighty Word, will prepare us to surrender and transform all our character defects. We believe that every form of brokenness can be removed by Him—the Maker of heaven and earth, our true Renovator, our Wonderful Craftsman. God knows better than anyone else what is happening in our lives. Let us place our trust and confidence in Him—our Savior, our Creator, our Healer, and the Lord of our lives—and pray that He touches even those areas that seem unchangeable. We believe that God can and will remove all our defects and shortcomings and transform us into the new creation in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, today and in the days to come.

**In preparing this sermon series, I have drawn on materials and insights from various ministers, particularly those related to the Twelve Steps of A.A., as well as the “Life’s Healing Choices” series prepared by Rick Warren and his team.*