

The Story – With A Little Help From My Friends

Turn to Mark 2 as we continue our year long series. I want to look at Jesus' rather unique encounter with a paralyzed man and his friends in this story. In addition, I want to talk about the proposed building project and why I believe we are supposed to take this step. It occurred to me that because I usually say "pray about this and seek the Lord's will" that maybe some of you didn't know what I thought about the idea. So let me clarify, I believe we are supposed to take this next step and build what we have proposed. I'm going to tell you why in just a moment, but first I want to read the story from Mark 2 and make some observations.

"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts and he said to them, 'Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" Mark 2:1-12

There are many pieces to this story. The crowd that had gathered in Jesus' adopted hometown of Capernaum to hear him preach the word of God. The heart and compassion of four men who carried their friend to Jesus. The risk they took and the extreme measures they went to in tearing a whole in the roof in order to lower their friend into the room in front of Jesus. The controversy Jesus stirred when he said the man's sins were forgiven. The teachers of the law knew that no one but God could forgive sin. Jesus makes it plain that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins and to prove it, since you can't see someone's sins being forgiven, he healed the paralyzed man and told him to get up and walk. The point was, Jesus can forgive sins

just as he can heal disease because he is indeed the Messiah and the Son of the Living God. There is a lot to look at but I want us to focus on the four friends.

These four men were motivated by the need of their friend. He was paralyzed and his only hope was Jesus. **They knew the only thing they could do to help was get their friend to Jesus!** They decided to bring him to Jesus just as he was so carrying him on the mat he was laying on, they started walking to the house in Capernaum. I wonder if they were devising a plan as they went along. “What are we going to do when we get him there if the house is crowded?” “I don’t know, we will figure it out. All I know is Jesus is his only hope!” These men went out of their way, sacrificing in order to carry their friend all the way to Jesus.

All of us have friends that need Jesus. Are we as purposeful and intentional as these friends were? Do you look for ways to bring your friends to Jesus, to invite them to church, to bring them to church or to a life group? Are we motivated by the needs of our friends?

These friends were willing to take a risk and make a mess. When they arrived at the house and saw the crowd not only inside but pressing around the door and the windows, they realized it was going to take an extreme measure to get their friend to Jesus. They decided to climb onto the roof and tear off a section of what was apparently a thatched and mud roof. It wasn’t like they were tearing off shingles and sawing through wooden beams, but it was no small task they were undertaking as they pulled off pieces of the roof, managed to get their paralyzed friend up onto the roof and then lowered him down into the house with ropes. All the while they had to be wondering when the owner of the house was going to come out screaming “what in the world do you think you are doing? I don’t care how sick your friend is, you can’t tear up my house!” Or maybe the owner was screaming at them. All I know is these men were willing to take a risk for their friend because they knew they had to make a way for him to get to Jesus. They were willing to make a mess and I would assume they helped clean it up and put the roof back on with gratitude and joy for the miracle that had happened to their friend!

Are we willing to take a risk to get our friends to Jesus? Most of us are afraid we will offend someone if we talk about our faith. We don’t want to be too bold, but these men knew what we all know in our heart, that the only hope for their friend is Jesus. What are you willing to risk to bring someone to Jesus? Reputation? Money? Convenience? Remember, Jesus is their only hope!

These four exercised their faith for their friend. Notice what verse 5 says, “**When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’**” It wasn’t the paralyzed man’s faith. We don’t know that he had any faith. It was the faith of the four friends that drew Jesus’ attention. These men did what they did, exercising their faith, not for themselves but for another. Do you have faith for your family members and friends? Do you have faith for their salvation or their healing? Jesus sees your faith!

These four did their part and Jesus did His part! They couldn’t heal their friend. They couldn’t forgive his sins. They didn’t have to. All they had to do was figure out the best way to get their friend to Jesus and then they could trust Jesus to do what only he could do. They were confident that acting in faith and getting their friend to Jesus would make all the difference.

We don’t have to save our friends or heal them. We can’t. But we do have a responsibility to bring them to Jesus, or bring Jesus to them. We need to be faithful to do our part and let Jesus do his part.

It took all four to get their friend to Jesus. Any one of these friends alone couldn’t have done the job. Imagine one or two guys trying to carry their friend on the mat. I laughed as I pictured two of them trying to lower him down with a rope into the room. It took all four to get their friend to Jesus. We are better when we work together in bringing the hurting and desperate to Jesus! It’s what the church is all about isn’t it? And with that said, let me tell you why I think we are supposed to take this next step and build again.

The reason for the whole project when it gets right down to it, is because we’ve all got friends and family that are broken and hurting and we need to get them to Jesus! That’s what any church building project is all about ultimately. That’s our motive. At least it had better be! We want to get more people to Jesus. A building and all that comes with it, all the technology we are talking about, all of it is just a tool for us to use to get people to Jesus.

Well, why just remodel the sanctuary and build more lobby space? Why not build a bigger, new sanctuary? Good question. Sometime after the tornado rebuild we created a master plan that included a 1200 seat sanctuary. What you may not remember is that the master plan called for us to do essentially what we are proposing to do. We would have to extend and expand the lobby. We would have to build a production room to handle video. The master plan called for another gathering space on the westside, just as we are proposing. What we are talking about is essentially phase 2 of that master plan we designed years ago. It doesn’t change the

footprint we laid out then. What we are doing is taking a step forward that helps us today but prepares the way for whatever God decides to do in the years ahead.

Well, do we have to do this to get people to Jesus? No. The four guys probably didn't have to tear the roof off either. They could have waited for another day, waited for the next time Jesus came home to Capernaum. They could have waited and we could too. It's always that way, with the exception of 1999 when the tornado hit. We didn't have to move to this property in 1967. We could have stayed where we were. We didn't have to build a gym back in 1977. You know why we did it? We thought it would help us reach more youth and young families. We thought we could get more people to Jesus if we did that! We didn't have to remodel the sanctuary in 1990. That's when we put all this wood and brass up here. You know why we did it? Because we thought the building was looking dated, out of style, it needed an upgrade in lighting and we even picked up some seats in the back and got a new sound booth. Did we have to do it? No, but we knew it was time. We thought it would bring more people to Jesus!

Last year about this time, standing in the service on a Sunday morning, I felt in my spirit that it was time to build, to remodel the sanctuary. The lobby addition and the choir and production room came about because to do one thing we had to do the other. The point of it all is we are simply trying to get more people to Jesus and this is one of the ways we can do it.

Is there risk involved? Sure there is. Just as the four friends risked something when they tore the roof off of the house, there is risk for us. Like the four friends we are going to make a mess in the process. There will be sacrifice involved, just as there was for the men carrying their friend. I'm sure it wasn't easy. We will have to give sacrificially because none of the construction crews will work for free. It will cost us money and inconvenience us for a bit as we meet in the gym. We may have to sit a little closer to each other for a while but it's okay. Nothing worthwhile is ever easy, but won't it be wonderful if we get more people to Jesus?

Are we risking something? Yes, but it's in our spiritual DNA as a church. Perhaps it's no coincidence that it was September 1936, eighty years ago this month when a group of saints meeting in a room over a drug store a few blocks from here decided to risk something. They put their names on the line, borrowed money and bought the corner lot across from where they were meeting and started digging a basement and a foundation and built what we call the old rock church. They risked it because they had friends and family they wanted to get to Jesus! They risked it when they spent the money to remodel it, to put a new front on it, to build an

educational space in 1953. Sure there is risk. There was risk in 1967 when they bought this ten acres and built this crazy octagonal church building on it. They risked tearing something up, changing things, but that's what you do when your motive is to get more people to Jesus. You are willing to make a mess, to risk, to give, to sacrifice, to carry a friend on a mat and lower them through the roof, to do whatever it takes to get your friend and your family to Jesus!

Listen, those four men exercised their faith and went to all that trouble for someone else. They did this for their friend. Let me tell you once again, we aren't doing this just for ourselves, we are doing this for others. I told you before, I could keep preaching right here in this sanctuary with it looking like this and it won't hurt me. I can manage without the changes and upgrades, but I don't know that the next generation could or would. I don't know that they can. Those four friends could have waited for another opportunity to see Jesus, but I don't know if their friend could. My concern is that without moving forward, we will stagnate as a church. We are going to settle for less than what God has prepared for us. I don't want us to decline because there are too many friends that we need to get to Jesus. I believe we have to move forward and this is the way forward for us.

I said in the letter I wrote that I believe we are building for today and for tomorrow. I truly believe that. I believe there is something in here for all of us. I'm excited about a new look, a fresh face. I'm excited because as superficial as a building may be in some ways, it still says something about the people that attend here. It says this church is still thriving and looking toward the future. We aren't dead and we aren't dying. I'm excited about it for today, but I'm excited mostly because I believe it is laying a foundation for the next young pastor to come in here and take this church forward. We will have it equipped and ready for someone to build the next phase, to take the baton that is handed to them and run the race!

Those four friends acted in faith and Jesus saw it, honored their faith and healed and forgave their friend. As always, we are acting in faith. We don't have all the money needed, but Jesus still honors our faith. If we are willing to do our part – to pray, give, sacrifice, believe – Jesus will be faithful to do His part. He will provide if we will step out in faith.

This church has always acted in faith. In looking back at the records, in 1957 the church bought this Hammond organ for \$2,709. That was 13% of that year's tithes. Everything is a step of faith isn't it?

Those four friends acted with faith, with creativity to get their friend to Jesus. I believe we can be just as creative in bringing people to Jesus. That's part of what this whole remodel of the sanctuary will provide with all of the technological upgrades. We can creatively bring people to Jesus and bring Jesus to people almost anywhere. If we will do our part, no telling what God will accomplish when he does his part!

The miracle happened to their paralyzed friend because they all worked together. It took all four of them to get their friend to Jesus and it will take all of us to do this. There is no one person that can pay for this or should pay for it. We will all have to give and sacrifice. We will all have to pray and trust and believe. We will all have to squeeze in and make some adjustments. It may be a little messy for a while when we start pulling the roof off (that's a reference to the story in Mark. We aren't tearing the roof off!) But together, we can do this. We can do this with a little help from our friends. We can build for today and for tomorrow. We can bring more people to Jesus! We did it before. Jesus did it before. Who knows, we might build this one debt free as well. When the paralyzed man walked out of the house the people said, **"We have never seen anything like this!"** We said that when we rebuilt debt free after the tornado in 1999. Wouldn't it be something if a year or 18 months from now we were all saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Church, I believe it's time to build. I believe it's time for us to do this, to prepare the way for the next generation of leaders and builders at Carbondale. I believe it's time to do this because we may be running out of time and we need to use every means possible to get every person possible to Jesus! He is the only hope! Together, with a little help from all of us, and with our trust in Jesus, we can do this!

Think of someone you know that needs a miracle, that needs Jesus. What can you do to bring them to Jesus, or to bring Jesus to them? Are you willing to take the risk? To take the next step?

Let's take a moment and ask God to help us be like the four friends, willing to risk and sacrifice to bring others to Jesus.