

Before Sermon in Main -- Gideon speaker intro...

Introduction - Welcome back to week 2 of our Fall Vision Refresh series. This series is designed to refresh us in why we do all this church stuff and the part you play in it.

The first four books of the Bible are called the Gospels. Last week I shared with you the story of the paralytic that was lowered through the roof out of the Gospel of Mark. Today I want to take a deeper dive into that story from Luke's account of it. This story is an excellent illustration of our mission as a church and the part you play in it. So, turn in your Bibles to Luke 5.

Set stage in context and flow of events of Luke 4-6

In the stories leading up to our story for today, Jesus shows up in houses of worship and in houses of friends healing people with the touch of his hand. Luke points out that Jesus is not only healing physical diseases, but he is also demonstrating complete authority and power over evil spirits.

And every time those evil spirits recognize Jesus for who he is and say it out loud. One said, *"I know who you are—the Holy One sent from God"* (Luke 4:34). Another declared, *"You are the Son of God"* (Luke 4:41).

Jesus is also showing complete authority and power over creation filling Peter's nets full of fish. Reports of Jesus' power were spreading like crazy all around the region and huge crowds were coming to hear Jesus teach and to be healed of their diseases.

In those crowds, the opening verses of our story tell us that, there were some religious leaders who had come from every village in Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. But, make no mistake, these religious leaders were not there to support and affirm Jesus, they were there to try and discredit his ministry.

They didn't believe he was the Son of God at all. And his claims to be so annoyed them to no end. Essentially their agenda was to gather material for a classic-ole smear campaign. You think the political scene is ugly today? They were probably hoping for some sort of October surprise or literally some other damning verbal gaff.

[Transition] – Let's pick up the story in Luke 5, verse 17-19. I'm reading from the NIV.

A typical Palestinian house had a relatively flat roof that was accessible by an outside staircase. To be certain, opening a space big enough in the clay tile roof construction to lower a paralyzed man on a mat would have required some significant effort. I imagine it required some digging and tile removal, enough to lower a grown man through. I'm sure some kind of debris was falling through onto the people below. Not distracting at all. None of that seems to matter to these guys.

NOTICE, the only thing that matters to them...the only thing driving their above and beyond behavior is the goal of getting their broken friend RIGHT IN FRONT OF JESUS! I want you to underline that phrase at the end of verse 19. All their hope for help for this friend was in Jesus...and all they wanted to do was get him IN FRONT OF JESUS.

[Transition] – Now, look at verse 20.

When Jesus sees what's happening he immediately recognizes their faith that's at work in their action. Notice, the first thing he speaks to is this man's deepest need: forgiveness. Then he addresses his felt need or presenting need; physical healing.

The people saw an afflicted body, Jesus saw his afflicted soul. And he knew the posture of repentance in the man's heart. Matthew's account tells us that when Jesus sees this guy being lowered down in front of him the first thing he says to him is, "Cheer up! Your sins are forgiven."

[Transition] – And that declaration is just what these religious leaders were hoping for. That's the sound bite they would put on *their social media smear campaign*. Look at verses 21-25.

Jesus really sets these guys up. He first points out the obvious. Way easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," which is impossible to confirm if it happened or not. But, then to prove that he was the Son of God who had the power of God to forgive sin, he demonstrated the power of God to heal which was immediately verifiable.

Never forget this, Jesus came to forgive sins, and he proves his ability to do it through his healing miracles. The act which the eyes are able to see proves the reality of the act which no eyes can see" [\[1\]](#)

In fact, Luke's whole point in recording this story is to report a clear and irrefutable demonstration of the deity of Jesus; that in fact, he is the Son of God. Only God is able to send our sins away from us so that we are forever rid of them and even he cannot find them.

In the stories leading up to this one, the people being healed and the demons being ordered around recognize Jesus as the Son of God and now it was the Pharisees' turn. But they are just completely irritated by Jesus. They refer to him with a derogatory term, "this fellow." It's like saying, "Who is this loser, this lunatic who blasphemes."

They knew God alone was able to forgive sin. But their tragic mistake was that they considered Jesus just a man, just another great teacher or worse; a loser, a lunatic who was just crazy talking, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary.

[Transition] – Now, let's read Luke's wrap up of this story, look at verse 26.

Guys, this is what happens when you get in front of Jesus. When you get in front of Jesus with faith-filled expectation, it's life changing. When

people get in front of Jesus, they experience forgiveness, they experience healing, God is glorified, and others are inspired.

Folks, I submit to you this story is for us as a church. This is what we are called to do! ***Our fundamental call as the church is to be the ones who get people in front of Jesus so he can forgive their sin and heal their brokenness.***

[**Transition**] – This is why, verses 18-19 grip me. These two verses capture who we are called to be and what we are called to do as a church: We are to be *men and women who stop at nothing to get people RIGHT IN FRONT OF JESUS.*

The rest of the story confirms God's part...but these two verses capture our part: Men and women who are willing to do whatever it takes to see that the people in these foothills and beyond get RIGHT IN FRONT OF JESUS! **To do that we have to be willing to grab a corner of their mat.**

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What were these mat carriers like?

Even though we don't know anything about them prior to this and even though they don't say anything in the story, their actions show us a ton about who they are. Let me call your attention to a couple observations.

They were personally invested

They didn't stand on the sidelines of life simply thinking to themselves, "Boy, that guy needs Jesus." They didn't stand by, wringing their hands with pity saying, "Oh, if he only knew Jesus."

No. They noticed his need, and then stepped up, grabbed a corner of the mat and carried him. They stepped up and did for him what he could not do for himself. They didn't fix him, they couldn't fix him, but what they could do, they did...THEY GOT HIM RIGHT IN FRONT OF JESUS.

Think about what that cost these guys? Time...energy...personal reputation? I mean, remember, this paralytic is ceremonially unclean so that means that they would be jeopardizing their own convenience because they would then have to go through the ceremonial cleansing phases of isolation socially and economically and then offer the proper sacrifices at the temple to be reinstated. So, their choice wasn't convenient.

For our church to effectively answer God's call on us to get people in front of Jesus, it's going to take each and every one of us being personally invested. Each corner of the mat needs a hand. **When you don't step up and grab your corner...the whole effort suffers.** You ever try to carry something on a mat or tarp with only three corners being lifted? Not ideal

This principle of personal investment is so crucial for us as a church in so many areas. If each one of us don't step up and grab a corner of the ministry mat, the effectiveness of the program suffers.

[Illustration] - As we have launched our AWANA program this fall, there has been a great response of kids wanting to join. But we don't have enough AWANA workers to accommodate them, so we had to start a wait list.

Every year near the beginning of AWANA they do a BARF night. (Bring A Real Friend). But, we might not be able to do that bring-a-friend night, because we are not able to accommodate those new attenders.

This is not a drive by guilting at all. I'm just letting you know what happens when there is a corner of the ministry mat of AWANA that someone isn't grabbing. In effect, instead of getting these kids right in front of Jesus we had to tell them to wait on the mat.

Similar for our Children's Sunday school ministries. Our church is growing. To accommodate all the new children, we really need to split

some classes up and add some classes. To do this we need additional mat carriers. We need additional teachers and classroom aids.

[Transition] - This is why I'm saying, if you are not grabbing your corner of the mat the effectiveness of our mission as a church is restricted. Now, there's another observation I want to make about these mat carrying friends.

They were persistent

They found a way to get their friend to Jesus despite the obstacles.

They refused to give up. They refused to get discouraged. They showed focused determination to find another way when their original plan didn't work out. No barrier got in their way. They showed commitment, love, determination and courage.

When we are trying to get a friend or family member in front of Jesus, we never know what will work. Often what we think will work, doesn't and we have to try another way. These guys in our story today teach us that we have to just keep trying. We can't give up. We cannot lose heart.

As a church we have to be willing to try whatever might work. What would have happened if these guys would have said, "Lower him through the roof? That won't work. We've never done it that way before." Or, "Lower him through the roof? That's not the way I'm used to seeing it done. Too distracting"

Fundamentally, when our efforts as a church leave our friends in these foothills outside instead of inside in front of Jesus, then we must be persistent and try another way. It might even mean an unconventional, raise the roof type of way.

[Transition] - One final observation about these guys...they were convinced.

They were convinced

Their faith was recognized by Jesus by their action. They were convinced that Jesus **could and would DO something**. Do you really believe that God still can and will do something as we get right in front of him as a church on Sundays? Do you really believe that God can and will do something when we bring our friends...the men, women, students and kids of these foothills... right in front of Jesus.

[Illustration] - Every now and then I'll ask myself this question on my drive to church on Sunday mornings, "Am I convinced that God can and will do something...in me and/ or in someone else at church this morning?

Do you come to our gathering on Sunday mornings expectant? Do you pray for it? Do you look for it?"

[Transition] - Remember this: Friends don't let friends be kept from Jesus. Instead, friends get friends in front of Jesus. So, what does it look like for you and I to carry a corner of the mat for another?

What does it look like for you and I to carry a corner of the mat for another?

Every time you...expend time, talent and treasure in big or small ways for the purpose of serving Jesus and his people, you grab a corner of the mat.

- When you lend a hand and join the cooking team for our Patio BBQ's like today...you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you serve in the sound booth...when you serve in the cafe...when you listen to AWANA kids recite verses, you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you serve at a Men's Golf Tournament or help at a Women's event, you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you give to missions or go on a short-term mission trip or pray for a missionary you grab a corner of the mat.

- When you hold babies in the nursery, serve as a counselor at High School Camp or clean up after a church event...you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you quilt at Dorcas quilters or feed the hungry at Senior Nutrition...you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you serve on our Emergency Response or security team on Sunday mornings, you grab a corner of the mat.
- When you serve at the Arab American Learning Center or lead in the community as a fully devoted follower of Jesus you grab a corner of the mat.

Whenever you faithfully serve and give so that others can be brought right in front of Jesus...you are stepping up and grabbing a corner of the mat.

Do you have a hand on a corner?

You know what's sobering about this whole story today? There are only two types of people in it: Those who block the way to Jesus and those who find any way possible to Jesus.

Are you hindering or helping to get people in front of Jesus?

Main service...pray

Classic Service...transition to Gideon presenter:

We have a number of people grabbing a corner of the mat through their involvement with Gideon's International—some supporting financially, and some actively involved.

Today we have a representative from Gideon's International with us to give us brief update on their ministry.....

^[1] (Lenski, R.C.H., [Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel](#), Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1946, p. 300).