

Throwing the Lifeline

Series: Being a Lifesaver

Text: Mark 2:1–12 (NIV)

Key Verse:

Mark 2:5 (NIV)

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

Introduction

One of the most dramatic rescues you will ever witness is a helicopter rescue at sea. When a ship is sinking or a swimmer is trapped in dangerous waters, rescue crews lower a lifeline. The person being rescued often cannot save themselves. They need someone willing to risk inconvenience, danger, and sacrifice to bring them to safety.

Spiritually, countless people are in the same condition. Some are trapped in addiction. Some are overwhelmed by guilt. Some are imprisoned by fear. Some have become paralyzed by disappointment, shame, or hopelessness. Many cannot—or believe they cannot—find their way to Jesus on their own. That is where the Church comes in. God has called His people to throw the lifeline. Mark 2 gives us one of the greatest pictures of biblical evangelism in all of Scripture. It is not about one man's faith alone. It is about four ordinary men who refused to let obstacles keep someone from Jesus.

The house is overflowing. People crowd every doorway. Jesus is teaching.

Outside...

Four men arrive carrying a paralyzed friend. The obvious solution? Walk through the front door.

The problem? There isn't one. The crowd blocks every entrance. Most people would have gone home.

These men climbed onto the roof. Removed part of it. Lowered their friend directly in front of Jesus.

That is the kind of faith that changes lives.

I. Lifesavers Carry People When They Cannot Carry Themselves

Mark 2:3

"Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them."

Before Jesus ever spoke to the man...

Four friends moved toward him.

The paralytic could not reach Jesus without help.

His greatest need was not simply physical healing.

He needed someone willing to carry him to the Savior.

Spiritual Insight

Many people today are spiritually paralyzed.

They are immobilized by:

- guilt
- addiction
- depression
- anxiety
- shame
- bitterness
- broken relationships
- false religion
- hopelessness

Sometimes they cannot even imagine that Jesus could change their lives.

Our calling is not to condemn people for being unable to move.

Our calling is to carry them toward Christ.

Galatians 6:2

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

The Church was never designed to be a museum for the healthy. It is a rescue station for the broken.

Application

Who is God asking you to carry?

- A struggling family member.
- A coworker.
- A prodigal child.
- A discouraged believer.
- A neighbor.

Sometimes carrying someone means praying for them every day.

Sometimes it means listening.

Sometimes it means inviting them to church.

Sometimes it means refusing to give up on them.

II. Lifesavers Refuse to Let Obstacles Stop Them

Mark 2:4

"Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof..."

The crowd became the obstacle.

Ironically...

The people closest to Jesus became the barrier preventing others from reaching Him.

That is a sobering thought for every church.

The Friends Saw Obstacles Differently

Most people would have seen:

A full house. Locked doors. An impossible situation.

The four friends saw:

Another way.

Faith always looks for possibilities instead of excuses.

Obstacles We Face Today

People say:

"I've been hurt by church." "I'm too busy."

"I've done too many bad things." "I don't believe God could forgive me."

"My family would reject me."

The enemy specializes in creating barriers.

Faith specializes in overcoming them.

The Roof

Homes in first-century Capernaum often had flat roofs constructed with wooden beams covered by branches, packed mud, and clay. Outside staircases commonly led to the roof.

Removing part of the roof required determination and likely created considerable inconvenience. Yet these men valued one man's soul more than their own comfort or reputation.

III. Jesus Honors Persistent Faith

Mark 2:5

"When Jesus saw their faith..."

Notice what Jesus saw.

Not merely the paralyzed man.

He saw **their faith**.

Faith is often visible before it is audible.

These men didn't simply believe Jesus could help.

They acted on what they believed.

Faith Is Active

James 2:17 reminds us:

"Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Real faith climbs roofs.

Real faith perseveres.

Real faith serves.

Real faith sacrifices.

Real faith keeps bringing people to Jesus.

Greek Word Study

The Greek word for **faith** is **πίστις** (*pistis*).

πίστις (pistis) (PIH-stees)

Pronunciation: PIH-stees

Pistis means trust, confidence, conviction, and faithful reliance. Biblical faith is more than intellectual agreement—it is wholehearted trust that results in obedient action.

The four friends demonstrated *pistis*. Their confidence in Jesus produced determined action.

Holiness Application

Entire sanctification strengthens our faith because a heart fully surrendered to God becomes increasingly willing to obey Him regardless of obstacles.

Holy people are courageous people.

When love for Christ controls us, fear no longer dictates our actions.

IV. Jesus Deals with the Greatest Need First

Mark 2:5

"Son, your sins are forgiven."

This is surprising.

The man came seeking healing.

Jesus offered forgiveness.

Why?

Because forgiveness is humanity's greatest need.

A healed body without a redeemed soul still faces eternity separated from God.

Jesus always addressed eternal needs before temporary ones.

Salvation Comes First

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes reconciliation with God over earthly comfort.

Physical healing is wonderful.

Emotional healing is important.

Financial provision is a blessing.

But none compare to the miracle of salvation.

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Our ministry should always point people beyond temporary solutions to the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. Jesus Has Authority to Forgive and Restore

The religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority.

Only God can forgive sins.

Exactly.

Jesus' miracle proved His identity.

He forgave the man's sins.

Then He healed his body.

The physical miracle confirmed the spiritual miracle.

The Greatest Miracle

The greatest miracle in Mark 2 is not that a paralyzed man walked.

It is that a guilty sinner was forgiven.

Every salvation is a greater miracle than physical healing because it changes eternity.

VI. Everyone Glorified God

Mark 2:12

"We have never seen anything like this!"

When people encounter Jesus, lives change.

The man walked.

The crowd worshiped.

God received the glory.

True evangelism never points attention to ourselves.

It always points people to Christ.

Conclusion

This story asks every believer an important question:

Who are you carrying to Jesus?

Perhaps you have someone in your life who seems spiritually paralyzed.

Don't give up.

Keep praying.

Keep loving.

Keep inviting.

Keep believing.

Sometimes the greatest act of faith is simply refusing to stop carrying someone to Christ.

Invitation

Today, some of you may identify with the paralyzed man.

You have tried to carry burdens you were never meant to bear.

The weight of sin, guilt, shame, fear, or failure has left you unable to move forward.

The good news is that Jesus still forgives, restores, and makes people whole.

Come to Him today in repentance and faith. He has authority to forgive your sins and power to transform your life.

Others may identify with the four friends.

God has placed someone on your heart—a child, a spouse, a coworker, a neighbor, or a friend who is far from Christ.

Will you commit to carrying them to Jesus through persistent prayer, compassionate love, faithful witness, and unwavering hope?