

Let's suppose you have a good friend who comes to you and begins to complain about some sort of aches and pains they have been experiencing. Now you really care about this person, this is someone you love and you cherish, and you can't stand the thought of seeing this person go through life with those awful aches and pains. Now you know for a fact that there is a doctor in town who specializes in helping people who suffer from these aches and pains. You know this because you once had those same aches and pains, you know what its like to suffer in that manner, but a friend recommended that you see a doctor in town, and you went to the doctor and he gave you a routine to help fix the problem and when you followed it, you felt better. You were healed. Now, because you care about this person, and because you believe that this doctor can indeed make this person better, you tell your friend about him and offer to bring your friend to the doctor's office so that he can meet the doctor himself and feel better.

But here is where it gets tricky, because you may care for that person, and you may believe that the doctor can make your friend better...but it is up to your friend to submit himself to the doctor's authority and follow the remedy given to him. That's the choice he must make for himself. As the old saying goes, you can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink. He must recognize the authority of the doctor over him and do what the doctor says in order to be healed of the aches and pains.

Now I say this, because I view the church in much the same way. We live in a world full of hurting people. Everywhere you turn, someone is hurting either physically, emotionally, or spiritually. *Once when Billy Graham was preparing for one of his crusades, he wrote and asked the community leaders to send him a list of the hurting people in the community for him and his team to be praying for. The leaders sent him a copy of the phone book.* There are people, even in our own pews, hurting today.

And as the church, we want to bring people who are hurting to Christ because we know what a difference Jesus makes in our lives. We know that the aches and pains we experience in this world are made better when we take upon ourselves His yoke and burden, and that is why we strive so hard to bring people to Christ. Not so we can build a large church, but because we believe Jesus makes a difference in a person's life.

But not everyone makes the decision to submit to the authority of Christ. Just like today, some people have always had a hard time submitting to the authority of Christ. As Jesus made His intentions clear, people were forced to either accept Him as the Son of God and thus surrender to Him and follow, or reject Him and thus they could remain the one in control.

Jesus can make a difference in our lives, but only if we are willing to lay aside our own self and allow Him to fix us. Jesus says He can deliver people if they will simply trust Him, put Him in control and follow Him. I hope that at the end of this sermon that is exactly what we all will decide to do. Trust Jesus completely with our whole life and submit all that we are to Him. In our text that was read to you this morning, we are going to see four friends behave much like a church, and bring their friend to Jesus and he will see firsthand the power and the authority of Jesus Christ.

Now the first thing I want you to see here is the Faith of these friends. Look at Mark 2:1-4, “*A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ 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.*”

Now we can't separate what takes place here from what has happened in Chapter one of Mark. In that chapter, the people were amazed at Jesus. He taught like no one else had ever taught before, with authority! He showed that he had authority over the demonic powers, and people were amazed by it, and he showed his authority over diseases when He healed a man with leprosy, and the people were amazed. So amazed in fact, that when word got around that Jesus had returned, the people flocked to where He was. So much, that the house He was staying in (which since this was in Capernaum where Peter lived many people believe this was Peter's house) was packed full. Everyone wanted to get near Jesus and hear Him speak.

Now these four men in our text knew that their friend was hurting. Now in those days, the only way a man who was disabled like this could earn a living was to have his friends carry him to a corner of a street and there he would beg for money. This man was completely dependent on other people. *Max Lucado points out that for this man, life was to say the least difficult. He writes, “Someone had to wash his face and bathe his body. He couldn't blow his nose or go on a walk. When he ran, it was in his dreams, and his dreams would always awaken to a body that couldn't roll over and couldn't go back to sleep for all the hurt the night dream had brought.”*

Now imagine seeing someone you love live like this, someone you care suffer in this way. Maybe you can picture the people around you hurting even as we speak. The co-worker whose marriage is falling apart because of his own deceitfulness and infidelity. The friend who is caught up

in trying to live for today that there credit cards are maxed out and they are swayed by any and all peer pressure and you see it is tearing him apart. Maybe it's not always linked to something they've done. Maybe you just see someone hurting in need of support and hope. That loved one who is without work and is now worried and fearful about making ends meet and putting food on the table for his family. You see them all around you, people who are hurting. You see them everyday, perhaps you saw one in the mirror this morning.

These men saw their friend in this condition, and they believed that Jesus could make a difference in his life. So they were not going to let anything stand in their way of getting their friend to Jesus. Their friend couldn't walk, so they carried him. The crowd blocked their access to Jesus, so they went around them. The roof was in their way, so they tore a hole in it! Nothing was going to stand in their way. *My wife's dad, John Pastore, told me about when he pastored a church up in Indiana, he got a phone call from a woman in his church, and she was hysterical asking him to come over, and when he got there she was in tears on the ground, and John looked at her husband, (now John's a big Italian guy-Think Tony Soprano!) and he said to him, "Did you hit your wife!" No I didn't preacher! "Did you hit your wife!" No, I didn't preacher! John said to this woman, "Why are you crying like this?" She said, "He won't go to church with me!" John took full advantage of it, "Now you go to church with your wife!" Whatever it takes to get a loved one to Christ!*

Now, we all know co-workers, friends, neighbors, loved ones who are paralyzed and are in need of healing? Are we inviting them to come to church with us on Sundays? Are we letting them know that there is hope and deliverance in Jesus Christ, or are we letting obstacles get in our way. *Ray Steadman in his commentary on this said that these were daring men. They dared to be difficult- it wasn't easy lugging the man around, especially up onto a roof. They dared to do the unorthodox-they were not limited by the fact that it was not customary to lower a man through a roof during a sermon. And they dared to be costly-someone was going to have to pay for the roof to be fixed, but it was worth it to bring a friend to Christ.*

I want tell you why this passage means so much to me. *This is the passage that was used for a sermon by a preacher named Brother Darrell. Brother Darrell was preaching a revival in a small church in Cecilia, KY and he used this text, and he said that you are here today because somebody cared enough about you to bring you to Jesus. Now, my Dad had ordered my brother and I there, and that night I decided that I would follow Christ as Lord and Savior in my life. Maybe some of you are here today, because a*

wife, a husband, a friend, a mom, or a dad led you here, because they see that you are hurting, and they want you find healing in Christ.

Now these men tore a hole in the roof, and if this was Peter's house, I'm thinking Peter was saying, "My roof, what are you doing to my roof!" I like to imagine that while everyone else might have been upset about this disturbance, Jesus was smiling, and I think this because in vs. 5, look at what it says, "***When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."***"

Now isn't it interesting that they brought the man to be healed of a physical ailment, but Jesus doesn't mention anything about the man's body at first. Instead he mentions the man's sins. In John 9, Jesus dispels the myth that all suffering is a direct result of a persons sins, but it appears here that this man's condition was linked to some act of disobedience in his life. In Matthew's account, Jesus tells this man to be of good cheer, because his sins were forgiven. Maybe this man was having a hard time accepting God's forgiveness, and that guilt and burden had paralyzed him.

Now here is the thing with Jesus, when you come to Him and ask Him to fix something, He's going to want to get to the source of the problem and not just the symptoms of the problem. I love to listen to Tony Evans. Tony Evans is a black preacher in Dallas, TX and at a Promise Keepers convention, Tony Evans began his message by telling the story of how he woke up one morning and he noticed a large crack going up his bedroom wall. He got on the phone and called the repair man out, and the repair man looked at the crack and then told Tony Evans, "The crack is not the problem." Tony Evans said to him, "Are you crazy, I can see the crack, you can see the crack, my wife can see the crack, all of God's children can see that crack, and you're telling me that the crack is not my problem." The man said, "No, the crack is not your problem, your foundation is your problem. I can spackle the crack and it will look better for a while, but until you fix your foundation, your crack will keep coming back."

Now a lot of folks come to Christ saying, "Lord help my marriage! Help my worries! Help my struggles!" And Jesus wants to help in all those areas, but Jesus will go to the heart of the problem, and at the heart of that problem may be something that may be tough to deal with, something like sin or the guilt of past sin in your life. You see, Jesus could have simply said, "You're healed!" but the paralysis would have come back. Jesus knew what the root of this man's troubles were, and so that is where He started. His four friends want Jesus to give the man a new body so he can walk. Yet Jesus gives grace so the man can live. So instead of simply healing the man, He forgives him.

Now when Jesus said this, not everyone was happy with it. Mark 2:6-8 says, “*Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,* ⁷ *“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* ⁸ *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?”* This teachers of the law see this and they begin to think to themselves, “Who does He think He is! What authority does He have to do this? Only God can forgive sins!” and Jesus knows what they’re thinking and turns to them and says, “Why you thinking like that!” Wouldn’t you have loved to have seen the expression on their faces!

You see they were thinking that only God had the power to forgive sins and they were thinking right. Only God can completely forgive sin. Now I can forgive you for committing a sin against me but that does not negate that the sin was also and primarily committed against God as well, and no human can forgive you for every sin you have ever committed, and the only person every sin is committed against is God, so these teachers of the law were right in a way...only God can forgive sins. But they didn’t realize who it was right before them.

So Jesus sets out to show them who He truly is. Mark 2:10-12, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ *“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”* ¹² *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!”* The crowds that once kept him out now part like the red sea to watch him walk out.

No one could forgive sins but God. No one could read minds but God. No one could heal paralysis but God. And Jesus did all three. He had not blasphemed God, bringing God down to His own level, instead He was revealing who He is. He is Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! He not only has the moral authority to forgive sin, but He has the compassion, the love and the grace to forgive sin, even your sin and my sin. That is why He came to the this earth. Jesus came to forgive our sins!

As the Son of God, He has the power to do it! His death on the cross is going to pay for it. You see, Jesus is not a plastic surgeon doing cosmetic repairs, sprucing up our image a little bit. Jesus is a heart surgeon, totally replacing our old sinful heart with a brand new one designed for spiritual life! And Jesus wants to heal your life today. Now we have brought you to this point where you can know Christ as the healer of your life, and I do this because I believe He can make a difference in your life,

but what you do next is up to you. Your friends have lowered you, Jesus is ready to forgive you, so are you ready to walk?