

## **Saints, Sinners and Roofers**

Turn with me to Mark 2 and I want to share a message I've entitled Saints, Sinners and Roofers. I thought about calling it Saints, Sinners and Whose Going to Fix My Roof? It is a familiar story for many of you. A story of healing and miracles and extraordinary friendship and faith. It is a story of resilience and refusing to allow obstacles to halt your progress or defeat you. I want to read the story and then go back and make some simple observations. There are several key phrases that I want to bring to your attention. Let's look at **Mark 2:1-12**.

V1 - NIV says **“the people heard that he had come home.”** Jesus apparently grew up in Nazareth but had relocated to Capernaum. We tend to miss this when we talk about Jesus. We think about Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, but the gospels refer to Capernaum as Jesus own town. This was now his home base as he ministered around the Galilee. Some believe he was the rabbi of the synagogue in Capernaum and that he had a home here. Most scholars believe he was staying at the home of Simon Peter. Remember Jesus indicated he didn't have a place to lay his head, indicating that perhaps he did not have a home of his own. It is more likely that he lived with or stayed with Peter when he was in the area. Regardless, the important thing is that he had come home to the location he considered as his home after traveling throughout the Galilee in ministry.

King James reads, **“And it was noised that he was in the house.”** I love that phrase “in the house!” It's like, “Is there a doctor in the house?” Jesus is in the house. What a difference it makes when Jesus is in the house. Does he live in your house? I mean by that, do you live your life, in your house, as though Jesus lived there as well? Whether you live alone or with a roommate or with a spouse or other family, do you live as if Jesus is in the house? Does your conduct reflect that Jesus is in your house? In terms of your attitude towards everyone else, do you live and act like Jesus is in the house? Do your conversations reflect that understanding, that awareness that Jesus is in the house with you, observing, listening, participating? Is he a welcome guest, a member of the family? Is he at ease in your house? Made to feel at home in your house?

I had the privilege of growing up in a home where I felt Jesus was always in our house. We talked about him as naturally and easily as if he was at the table. He was and is a very real presence in our lives, in our house. It's good news and it makes all the difference when Jesus is

in the house.

V2 - Look what happens if Jesus is present in your life - if word gets around that Jesus is in your house - King James uses the word "straightway". Immediately, as soon as people heard that Jesus was in that house, **"So many gathered that there was no room left."** You couldn't even make your way to the door, let alone get into the house. The people surrounded the place because Jesus was in the house. His presence makes all the difference.

Can we say that this morning? Can we say that Jesus is in this house? I pray we can. I pray that there is evidence and proof everywhere in this house that Jesus is here. Up stairs with our children, in the nurseries, in the Sunday School classrooms, on Wednesday night and Thursday night, in our life groups, with every age and status and season of life I pray that Jesus is in this house with us and that the world can see it. Jesus is in the house - in the life and expression of this church body - and the sick and the discouraged and the hurting, the lost and broken and dying can come and find healing and hope and laughter and life and peace. I can't do anything for anyone, but if Jesus is in the house... I can't encourage anyone, I can't deliver anyone, I can't save anyone, I can't heal anyone, I can't mend your breaking heart, but if Jesus is in the house... When Jesus shows up, when his life and his light shines through our lives, through our love and our caring, our gathering and our giving, then people are drawn to him - then the hurting and the broken and the sick and dying want to come to the house to find him. It happened that day in Capernaum and still happens today. If Jesus is in the house, people are drawn to him.

Notice what verse 2 says. The crowd gathered, **"and he preached the word to them."** He didn't just begin healing the sick, but he preached the word to them first. It is the word of God that produces faith. It is the word of God that is sharper than a double-edged sword. It is the word of God that breaks the shackles and chains of bondage from our lives.

Jesus preached the word to them. But what word was he preaching? What does that mean? Consider the fact that Jesus was the word of God according to John's gospel. And consider as well that the gospels tell us Jesus came announcing or proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand, that it was present among them. Jesus came with the gospel, the good news that the Kingdom of God was not far off, not awaiting a future day, but that it was in fact near to them, present among them through Christ. The kingdom of God, the effective establishment of

his will, his purposes, his authority, is here. His kingdom is present and then powerfully illustrating that fact, Jesus performed this miracle.

V3 tells us that some men came bringing a paralyzed man on a mat and that four of the men were actually carrying the other man. We don't know for sure if there were only four men or if there were more and only four carried the mat. We don't know anything about this man or his friends. What caused him to be in this position? Was he born this way? Was he completely paralyzed or just unable to walk? Did this happen as the result of an accident? We don't know. All we know is he desperately needed a miracle.

It's interesting that in all the progress made in the past 2,000 years, it appears that paralyzed is still paralyzed. There is simply not much that can be done as of yet. It is still beyond the scope, beyond the reach of science to repair or restore. A miracle is still required. There is no other hope.

We don't know anything about these men. Maybe they were life long friends, neighborhood pals or schoolmates. What ever the circumstances, they had heard the word that Jesus was in the house and that was reason and motivation enough to move them to pick up their friend and carry him to where Jesus was. But when they arrived, the crowd was so great they couldn't even see the door, let alone get through it carrying a man on a mat. Look at verse 4.

V4 - This phrase really struck me. **“Since they could not get him to Jesus...”** Since they could not... King James reads, “And when they could not...” It had been a great plan and a fine effort, but apparently it just couldn't be done. They couldn't even get near Jesus because of the crowd.

Think about it for a moment. It had been a grand idea and keep in mind, it was this paralytic's only hope. The friends had done all they could and now it was over. “We tried but...maybe it wasn't God's will. Maybe it wasn't your time.” They could have just given up and gone home. They could have tried waiting until the crowd dispersed. But Luke's account of this same event says something interesting. **“And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.” Luke 5:17.** That power was and is always present and available from heaven's perspective, but I believe it was something that was apparent and evident to the men carrying their friend that this was the moment. Now is the time for our friend's healing and deliverance.

They could not get him to Jesus...but that wasn't going to stop them. It sounds like a paradox, an apparent contradiction. They couldn't get him to Jesus so they decided they would get him to Jesus. They weren't going to be turned away or defeated.

How many times have you run up against the wall and said, "I can't" and then you've given up? "I just can't do it. That's it for me. The end of the line. Look, it's impossible." You've come up against obstacles that seem insurmountable, you've been turned back and rejected, you've failed in your attempts. You simply could not...

Imagine how that paralytic man was feeling. They had told him there was a healer in town that could raise him up, but now there is no way to get to him. Perhaps he said, "thanks for trying guys, but it's just one more failed attempt to get me off this mat. Let's just go home. It's just not meant to be." But the friends weren't going to let him give up.

"And when they could not..." they found away. It's a simple message for us. It's a simple word for someone and yet it is a profound word for someone who has come to that place of giving up in your life, in your walk with God, in your faith. You see, when you can't, God can.

There was too much at stake to quit or give up. When they couldn't, they looked for and found another way. The roof.

Houses in Israel had flat roofs, reached by an outside staircase and used for additional living space. They climbed to the roof, carrying their friend and started removing the roofing tiles or covering.

The passage literally says they unroofed the roof. NIV says they **"made an opening in the roof above Jesus and after digging through it..."** KJV says, "they uncovered the roof where he was and when they had broken it up." NASB says, "they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening..." They had to take off the roof covering and then dig through the dried mud or whatever the material was that served as the ceiling in the house. It was a radical plan and they literally dug their way through the roof - remember it had to be a hole big enough they could lower their paralyzed friend on his mat down into the room and ultimately in front of Jesus. (Bad news if you dug into the wrong room and had to start over...)

How crazy this whole plan seems, but these friends were determined. There was only one hope and that was getting their friend to Jesus. Confronted by what they could not do, they found

another way to get to Jesus. If you look, if you are determined, you will find the way to get to Jesus. You won't let anyone stop you, even if you have to dig a hole in the roof.

V5 - **“When Jesus saw their faith...”** Whose faith? I don't know about the faith of the paralyzed man, but it's obvious that Jesus and everyone present saw the faith of his friends. They believed if they could get their friend to Jesus he would be healed. He saw their faith. Sometimes faith is quiet, private, unseen, but sometimes it is bold, brash, daring. Their faith took action and did what was necessary to get him to Jesus. I believe it was their faith rather than the faith of the paralytic man to which Jesus responded. For everyone who feels like they just don't have enough faith for your healing, I believe the faith of this man's friends is what made the difference.

They had faith for his healing, but Jesus had something even bolder and greater in store. Jesus said, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** Jesus healed this man inside and out. Max Lucado spoke of this when he wrote, “They want Jesus to give the man a new body so he can walk. Jesus gives grace so the man can live.”

It wasn't just the hurting and the broken and the sick that gathered that day. Jesus' reputation had already spread throughout the area of the Galilee and people were coming from everywhere to see him and to hear him, including some learned theologians, scribes and pharisees. They were coming to judge. They were the teachers of the law but they were also the enforcers of the law and the tradition. They were shocked to hear him say the man's sins were forgiven. Forgiveness required sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, or at the least from the hands of a priest, not some itinerant rabbi from Galilee.

Many believed that all sickness was due to sin. Some taught that they wouldn't fully recover until all their sins were forgiven. If the man was totally healed, then they would have to believe his sins were totally forgiven and if they accepted that Jesus had done both, healed and forgiven, then they would have to admit he was truly the Messiah.

Jesus said, **“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.”**

Jesus asked the teachers of the law, “Which is easier, to say to the man ‘your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘get up, take your mat and walk’.” Which is easier? What a question to be

asked? They were powerless to do either one. So are we. But Jesus showed us his authority, his power, his glory, by doing both. The man was healed physically and spiritually.

He went home well and whole and restored and forgiven and the people praised God and said, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Let me sum this up with another couple of simple observations. It over-simplifies things, but it bears pointing out, the groups present that day.

**The crowd: prevented people from getting to Jesus.** I wonder if we sometimes fall into that category. We prevent people from getting to Jesus by our attitude, by our judgmentalism, our prejudice, our apathy, our priorities. We prevent people from getting to Jesus by our arrogance, by our self-righteousness. We prevent people from getting to Jesus by simply ignoring the needs around us. We turn our backs on the broken and hurting outside because we are so focused on what is happening on the inside of the house. We are so busy "having" church we stop "being" the church. Someone in the crowd could have turned around and said, "Let's make room for these men with their paralyzed friend. They need to get to Jesus." Apparently they kept their backs to the hurting outside the door and just remained focus on what was happening on the inside - just waiting to get something for themselves.

**The religious: wanted to control access to God.** The scribes, the teachers of the law wanted to control who could come to God and receive forgiveness or healing or any other blessing. "We don't just let anyone in you know. It's a pretty exclusive club to get into." I wonder if we sometimes fall into this category. "They don't look like they fit with us." "I don't know if you can really be a Christian and look like that." The teachers were thinking, "this man didn't go to the temple and offer sacrifice. We didn't even hear him repent of his sins so how can Jesus say his sins were forgiven?" He didn't even pray the sinners prayer so how can he be saved? He didn't go to an altar at an Assembly of God church so how do we know he is forgiven." God doesn't need us to carefully parcel out his forgiveness and grace or his healing or his spiritual empowerment. We aren't here to guard who gets into heaven. The bible says whosoever will may come. Jesus can heal anyone he wants and save whomever he wants. One group prevented people from getting to Jesus, one group tried to control who was qualified, but there was another group.

**The friends: wanted to get their friend to Jesus.** These guys were determined to find

whatever means necessary to get people to Jesus. I wonder if we are like these men? They were willing to sacrifice time, money, energy and effort to get their friend to Jesus. That's the crowd I want to be like. Looking for ways to introduce people to Jesus, to get them into his presence, even if it means taking the roof off.

Consider this, getting people to Jesus isn't always neat or clean or easy. Messy lives and difficult circumstances require patience and effort, but the outcome is worth it. They had to take the roof off, and I don't know if they put it back on or not, but the effort was worth it for the sake of a transformed life.

I want to be part of the crowd that is looking for ways to bring people to Jesus. Don't you? Give some thought to the group to which you belong. Maybe you need to look around and see if you have been preventing people from getting to Jesus or have you been helping them find their way to the only one who can set them free from physical and spiritual paralysis and death.

Maybe you have a friend who is physically or spiritually in a desperate situation. Perhaps it's time for you to find a way to bring them to Jesus, to speak to them, to encourage them. Are you a friend willing to sacrifice to bring someone to Jesus?

And maybe you find yourself in that desperate situation yourself, like the paralytic man, hopeless, helpless, feeling like you can't make it, ready to give up. You can't get to Jesus. But there are friends here today who won't let you quit – friends who are willing to lift you up, to carry you with their faith and love, to find a way to get you to Jesus. Don't quit. Don't give up. Jesus is in the house. He is here this morning, right here, right now, to meet your needs. To forgive your sins, to heal your body, to change your life. Are you willing to come to him? Maybe you need to bring someone to the altar with you this morning, maybe physically, or maybe someone the Lord has laid on your heart, but you need to come to Jesus and ask for his help. I want you to come right now. Jesus is in the house. Get to him. Come to him. Bring someone with you but come to Jesus today.

