

SERIES: "It's More Like Falling in Love"

SERMON: "Stretcher-Bearers"

SCRIPTURE: Mark 2:1-12

WED. BLURB: Who are your stretcher-bearers? This Sunday we're taking a look at a story when a paralyzed man is brought to Jesus for healing by friends who carried him on a stretcher. Who helps you when you are in need of help? Who helps you get to where you need to go? Who carries you to God when you need healing? We can't go it alone, you know. Jesus intended us to have friends who will be our "stretcher-bearers." Come this Sunday to hear how Jesus cares about us enough to put people around us to help us. We're not alone! It's more like falling in love!

HYMN SING

GREETING: David

WORSHIP SET: Sanctify

WORSHIP PRAYER: Andrew Buschena

Kids Go to Kids' Church, David

LOVE MOMENT: Amelia Buschena

PRAYER: Andrew Buschena

MISSION MOMENT: Gideons

OFFERING: Andrew Bonsell

VIDEO INTRO

PP#1: "It's More Like Falling in Love"

"Stretcher-Bearers"

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven!'" - Mark 1:5

"It's More Like Falling in Love." Stretcher-Bearers. Mark 1:5 "When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven!'"

This Lent, we're staying close to Jesus. We're watching, we're listening, we're traveling with Him. You see, as we prepare for Easter, we think of Jesus as our Savior, dying on the cross, saving us from our sin and giving us new life. But Jesus is not just someone who did all this. He is someone we have a personal relationship with. It's a love-relationship, Jesus' love for us, and our love for Him. The disciples lived with Him, walked with Him, ate with Him. And they fell in love with Him. And like them, we want to fall in love with Jesus, too. So, we are going to spend time with Him, watching Him, traveling with Him, being near Him. Our relationship with Jesus is more like falling in love!

PP#2: *Map of Galilee, including Nazareth and Capernaum, and perhaps even Cana.*

It's early in Jesus' public ministry. He came from Nazareth; He's about 30 years old. He was baptized by John in the Jordan River, and then spent 40 days in the wilderness wrestling with all of His temptations around His calling and ministry. We heard about that last week. After that, He traveled to Capernaum, a town on the north side of the Sea of Galilee, and made it His new home base. While walking along the shore there, He called some fishermen to leave their jobs and become

His full-time disciples: Simon, Andrew, James and John. He called them to follow Him. That's what a disciple of Jesus is, it is someone who follows Jesus!

Well, it says that He moved in with Simon Peter, who had a house in Capernaum. And Jesus spends some time in and around Capernaum, preaching, teaching, doing miracles. At one point He went over to nearby Cana for a wedding, and during the reception, listened to His mother and turned water into wine. He becomes quite a local attraction, and people never leave Him alone.

So then, He sets out for an extended trip around the country, preaching and healing throughout the towns. On one occasion, He heals a man from leprosy. His fame spreads, and whenever He enters a town, people flock around Him. Even when He hangs out in the countryside, people come from all over to seek Him out.

Well, Jesus then heads back home to Capernaum. And again, people crowd in from all over to see Him.

PP#3: Mark 2:1-12

1 After a few days, Jesus went back to Capernaum, and people heard that He had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no longer space, not even near the door. Jesus was speaking the word to them.

Mark 2:1-12. "After a few days, Jesus went back to Capernaum, and people heard that He had come home. So many gathered that there was no longer space, not even near the door. Jesus was speaking the word to them."

I'm not sure if He was at His home—remember He had moved in with Simon Peter—or at someone else's house. But He was in a house, and so many people had gathered around Him, it was standing room only, and they were backed out into the street.

PP#4: *Image of crowds of people backed out into the street trying to listen to Jesus in a house.*

To this crowd came four men carrying a fifth man on a mat, perhaps something like a stretcher. They had heard that Jesus was a godly man, and that He was healing people.

Now, place yourself there. You're in this crowd. You're pretty excited to be near Jesus. He's preaching and teaching amazing things...things that get you excited! He's explaining all about God, and God's plan for the world, and how God has come to bless His people. In the room with Jesus are some pretty important religious leaders, who had come to hear Jesus. You're all squished close together, everyone is hushed. If you stand on your toes, you can catch a glimpse of Jesus at times.

PP#5: *Image of the man being lowered through the roof by rope.*

You hear some commotion near the back of the crowd, some whispering, and you hear that some men had bought a paralyzed man, hoping Jesus could heal him. But they just can't get in. Then you hear some noise overhead. Footsteps. Muffled voices. Then scratching and scraping. Bits of the clay roof begin to fall. Everyone looks up, and more dust and debris fall on the people in the room. Jesus stops talking. Then, in a cloud of dust, a ceiling tile is pulled up. Everyone is shocked: "What's going on?" A second tile, a third. People are coughing from the dust, grit is getting in your hair. Suddenly, through the dust, you see a man lowered down through the hole by rope, tied to his mat!

PP#6: Mark 2:1-12

3 Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed.
 4 They couldn't carry him through the crowd, so they tore up part of the roof above where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying.

Verse 3, "Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed. They couldn't carry him through the crowd, so they tore up part of the roof above where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying."

PP#7: *Image of a typical, first-century, single-story, palestinian home with a flat roof.*

The house was probably a clay brick structure. Often homes were built so that more levels could be added later. So the roof was probably flat. There may have been steps up to it, or perhaps the men carrying the man stepped over from an adjacent house. The roof tiles probably weren't that hard to get through, and they probably could be easily repaired.

Even so, I'm sure the homeowners weren't very pleased! You don't just go digging through people's ceilings! But what captured their attention in the moment was the sight of the man dangling from ropes, being lowered down right in front of Jesus.

When the man is on the ground at Jesus' feet, Jesus looks up through the hole in the ceiling.

PP#8: Mark 2:1-12

5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven!"

Verse 5. "When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Child, your sins are forgiven!'"

Jesus looks at the four men who had lowered their friend, and He was amazed. He was amazed at their determination, their innovation, their obvious love for their friend. Look what they were willing to do for him. They wanted him healed, and they believed that Jesus could do it. They were not going to miss the opportunity, no matter what!

PP#9: *Image of the four men carrying the paralyzed man outside the home trying to get in.*

I mean, can you imagine the conversation they had when they were at the back of the crowd?

"Excuse me. Excuse us. Can we get through. Sorry, please let us through. Excuse us."

"Blast, impossible to get through."

"Just push, we've got to get through."

"No good. Not budging."

"Now what do we do?"

"Our mate here's got to get to Jesus."

"Jesus can heal him. Remember the guy with leprosy?"

"Back door?"

"No good."

"That's OK, guys, just leave me here. Perhaps Jesus will see me when He's leaving. I'll give that a try. Thanks, though. You're great!"

“No, we’ve got to get you to Jesus.”

“That’s OK. I can wait until He’s done.”

“We’re not leaving you, understand?”

“Ideas?”

“Hey, how about the roof?”

“What?”

“What?”

“The roof! The tiles are easy enough to get through.”

“You mean digging through the roof?”

“Sure, no problem. I can fix it up afterwards.”

“Come on, man, dig through their roof?”

“They’ll be so mad!”

“That’s all right. I can fix it. We’re working on my cousin’s house now. Same clay. I’ll just come over later and fix it. No problem. It’ll be better than it is now.”

“I don’t know.”

“Look, do you want to walk or not?”

“Of course.”

“Isn’t Jesus your best shot?”

“I suppose.”

“What do you got to lose?”

“Couldn’t we come back later, after the crowd’s gone?”

“You know how it is, the crowd never leaves.”

“Hey, no pain, no gain.”

“No guts, no glory.”

“Are you guys sure?”

“Sure we’re sure.”

“Git ’er done!”

“Let’s go!”

“Hang on!”

Jesus looks at these guys through the hole, shakes His head, and turns to the guy lying on the ground in front of Him. And He says, “You, my child, your sins are forgiven.”

PP#10: *Image of the paralyzed man on the floor in front of Jesus.*

Now, to us, this makes no sense. He wasn’t brought there for confession, right? They brought him to have his legs healed. And Jesus says his *sins* are forgiven? Weird!

But in that culture, they believed there was a closer connection between body and spirit. If a person was paralyzed, it could be because they were suffering punishment for sins they had committed. There was a stigma around people with handicaps. They might not be on God’s good side!

So, the shock in that room was not that Jesus made a connection between spiritual and physical healing. The shock was that Jesus dared to declare his sins were forgiven. You see, the Scriptures clearly taught that only God could forgive sins. And here Jesus just said He did!

PP#11: Mark 2:1-12

6 Some legal experts were sitting there, muttering among themselves, 7 “Why does He speak this way? He’s insulting God. Only the one God can forgive sins.”

Verse 6: “Some legal experts were sitting there, muttering among themselves, ‘Why does He speak this way? He’s insulting God. Only the one God can forgive sins.’”

When Luke tells this story, he says that some Pharisees and experts in the Scriptures had come to talk with Jesus, from all over as far as Jerusalem. Jesus was having audience with the bigwigs, and the rest of the crowd was trying to listen in. Well, when they heard Jesus says the man’s sins were forgiven, they began to take offense.

“What? Did He just say that the man’s *sins* are forgiven?”

“Absurd! He’s a rabbi, and He knows the Law says only God can do that!”

“Well, He may think He’s a rabbi, but obviously He didn’t take His training very seriously.”

“My, someone thinks highly of Himself.”

“Just as I suspected, all show and no depth.”

“Sloppy theology.”

“Obviously not a man of God.”

“No, certainly not.”

“I think our time is done here.”

“I hear the fish is good at the café.”

PP#12: Mark 2:1-12

8 Jesus immediately recognized what they were discussing, and He said to them, “Why do you fill your minds with these questions? 9 Which is easier—to say to a paralyzed person, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk’? 10 But so you will know that the Human One has authority on the earth to forgive sins”—He said to the man who was paralyzed, 11 “Get up, take your mat, and go home.”

Verse 8: “Jesus immediately recognized what they were discussing, and He said to them, ‘Why do you fill your minds with these questions? Which is easier—to say to a paralyzed person, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk’? But so you will know that the Human One has authority on the earth to forgive sins’—He said to the man who was paralyzed, ‘Get up, take your mat, and go home.’”

Jesus never challenges their main objection, that only God can forgive sins. Instead, He takes a different approach. He responds, in a sense, by getting them to ask themselves, “Can Jesus do what He says? Does He have the power, the authority to make happen what He says?”

Anyone can say, “You’re sins are forgiven,” because you can’t tell if they’re telling the truth or not. You can’t prove it. There is no discernable immediate difference.

Jesus gets gutsy. He steers the conversation into the more dangerous realm of something you can prove empirically. Does Jesus have the power to do what He says? Let’s try something you can measure! “Paralyzed man, ‘Get up, take your mat, and go home!’”

PP#13: Mark 2:1-12

12 Jesus raised him up, and right away he picked up his mat and walked out in front of everybody. They were all amazed and praised God, saying, “We’ve never seen anything like this!”

Verse 12: “Jesus raised him up, and right away he picked up his mat and walked out in front of everybody. They were all amazed and praised God, saying, ‘We’ve never seen anything like this!’”

Jesus heals the paralyzed man. Jesus *can do* what He says. That must mean that He can also forgive the man's sins. But, if only God can forgive sins, and Jesus does it, then...

And that's how the conversation dangles. The paralyzed man is *walking* through the crowd...no problem getting through now! And the people praise God, for they know they have just seen God's power break loose. The Jewish leaders can't bring themselves to answer their question, but they do say, "This is something that rocks our world!" And after the man leaves, all eyes focus on Jesus.

PP#14: Stretcher Bearers

Oh! Hasn't it been amazing being with Jesus during this fantastic story? Could you almost see it? Was it almost like you were there? Did you get excited? Did you focus your eyes on Jesus? It was so exciting! Talk about rocking your world!

Do you think they ever fixed the roof? I bet they didn't. I bet they left it as a testimony to Jesus' healing...maybe just putting a tarp over it or something.

Let's just go back to those four men for a minute. This story is about Jesus healing a paralyzed man. But at the moment in the story, when Jesus looked up at them and saw their faith, *He made the story about them, too*. Think about it: they shared in His miracle! Because of what they did, their friend was healed by Jesus.

Here's where the story for me goes from being a great story about Jesus, to being a story about Jesus and me. You see, I don't normally have God's power of physical healing flowing through me. I'm normally not at the center when Jesus performs exciting miracles that rocks our world. But I do know how to carry a stretcher! Jesus saw the faith of the stretcher bearers, and, although I don't get it, somehow, that helped the man get healed...physically and spiritually.

PP#15: Stretcher Bearers

1. We can be that kind of a friend!

We can be stretcher-bearers! We can help people get to Jesus! We can be that kind of a friend! We can do those simple labors of loving...and caring...and spending time with...and not listening to the culture who labels people as unworthy...and treating them as important...and being determined....being creative...being bold...being that kind of a friend. Who is God calling you to be a stretcher-bearer for? Who has God placed in your life that you need to be a friend like that for?

This makes me fall in love with Jesus: that He sees the stretcher-bearers! That He is impressed with their faith. That He includes them in the miracles He does, in the healings He does. That gets me all excited!

PP#16: Stretcher Bearers

1. We can be that kind of a friend!
2. We need those kinds of friends!

Another way I get into this story is that I sometimes feel like the paralyzed man. There are ways that I'm paralyzed. I don't always function well. And sometimes my spiritual failings lead to physical problems. I need healing and forgiveness from Jesus. And so, I need stretcher-bearers like those guys. I need people around me who will not give up on me, who will go the distance, who will stay with me and push through the problems that come. I know I get heavy and burdensome. I know at times I seem hopeless. But I need stretcher-bearers who will not give up on getting me to Jesus!

Who in your life have been your stretcher-bearers? Who are your stretcher-bearers right now? This is why it is so important to be in a life-sharing small group. We all need stretcher-bearers.

Again, this makes me fall in love with Jesus! Jesus doesn't leave us alone. He puts stretcher-bearers in our lives. That's one of the most amazing ways that Jesus helps us. He sees their faith, in Him, in us, and somehow that unleashes His healing power in us.

PP#17: Stretcher Bearers

[*Sanctify comes up.*]

1. We can be that kind of a friend!
2. We need those kinds of friends!
3. Jesus brings...
 - ...The Word of Life ("Jesus was speaking the word to them." 1:2b)
 - ...Forgiveness of sins ("Jesus...said...‘Your sins are forgiven!’" 1:5)
 - ...Healing ("Jesus raised him up." 1:12)

I also can't pass over the obvious. In this story, I see a Jesus who is speaking the Word of life. Jesus makes sure I know the words of life from God. He is the Word of Life! I see a Jesus who forgives sins, even my sins. Jesus is forgiving! And I see a Jesus who heals. No, not always in ways that I want Him to, but Jesus offers me healing: physically and spiritually. Jesus brings the Word, forgiveness and healing. That makes me love Him!

PP#18: Stretcher Bearers

[*Sanctify begins playing.*]

1. We can be that kind of a friend!
2. We need those kinds of friends!
3. Jesus brings...
 - ...The Word of Life ("Jesus was speaking the word to them." 1:2b)
 - ...Forgiveness of sins ("Jesus...said...‘Your sins are forgiven!’" 1:5)
 - ...Healing ("Jesus raised him up." 1:12)
4. Jesus calls him (me) His child!
 - "Jesus...said to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are forgiven!’" 1:5

There's one more part of this story that just captures me. Remember I said that in that culture people placed a stigma on those who had handicaps? They wouldn't go too far out of their way to help them, for they had something wrong with them. And that's what makes those four friends so amazing: they didn't treat the paralyzed man like that. They treated him as their friend, someone who was worth it.

But then, when Jesus sees their faith, He looks directly at the lame man. Now, I know it would have been hard not to, being dropped down right in front of you and all. But did you notice what Jesus said to Him? Jesus saw him, spoke to him, forgave his sins and healed him. But Jesus also *claimed him as one of His own*! He called him His *child*. Jesus changed that person's identity. He declared him a person of precious and infinite worth to God. That's how Jesus treats people like that. That's how Jesus treats people like me!

PP#19: It's More like falling in love!

This Jesus? He's captured my heart. He's captured me. Following Him is more like falling in love!

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: “It’s More Like Falling in Love”

BENEDICTION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FEB. 21, 2016

Winter Series: “Spiritual Growth”

Sermon: “Stretcher-Bearers”

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-25

Opening prayer

Introductions: Introduce yourself and share a time when a true friend helped you get close to Jesus.

Background: Skim Mark 1. What is going on in this chapter?

Read: Mark 2:1-12

1. Verse 1-2. Why were so many people gathered to see Jesus (Hint: Consult the end of chapter 1.)

2. What do you think was the content of what Jesus was saying?

3. Verses 3-4. Why were the men bringing the paralyzed man to Jesus? What caused them to hope?

4. Verse 4. Describe the kind of men these four friends were, based on this story.

5. Verse 5. Why did Jesus forgive the man’s sins? What did his friends have to do with it?

6. Verses 6-7. What irritated the Jewish leaders and experts? Would you have been irritated? Why?

7. Verses 8-9. Explain Jesus’ line of thought and argument here.

8. Verses 10-11. Why did Jesus heal the man physically?

9. Verse 12. What is the reaction from the crowd? Do you think that included the Jewish leaders?

10. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?