

August 21, 2005
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
“Witness – God’s Mission For Us”
Mark 2:1-12 NLT

Several days later Jesus returned to Capernaum, and the news of his arrival spread quickly through the town. 2 Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there wasn't room for one more person, not even outside the door. And he preached the word to them. 3 Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. 4 They couldn't get to Jesus through the crowd, so they dug through the clay roof above his head. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there said to themselves, 7 "What? This is blasphemy! Who but God can forgive sins!"

8 Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves, so he said to them, "Why do you think this is blasphemy? 9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'? 10 I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 11 "Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed!"

12 The man jumped up, took the mat, and pushed his way through the stunned onlookers. Then they all praised God. "We've never seen anything like this before!" they exclaimed.

Daily Devotions, public worship, discipleship, witness and service...we order our lives around these five core values because Jesus of Nazareth did and we want to be like Him. Today we will be talking about witness (just like the kids sang, we are on a mission for our Lord. As the Forever Family we are a people who not only know Jesus but are making Him known).

This sermon today is about four guys whose names are not even recorded in the scripture... four friends of a paralyzed man who did nothing more, or should I say, less than carry a friend into the presence of Jesus. (By the way, can you think of anything more important; any activity more significant than carrying a friend into the presence of Jesus? I can't! The truth is, that's what Jesus has commissioned each of us to do. This activity has a name-WITNESS. Here are some important truths we learn about witnessing from those four guys:

I. Christian Witness Begins with Friendship.

1. One of these four guys (maybe more but at least one of them!) befriended this paralyzed man, went out of his way to be a friend to someone in need. (side note: not many go out of their way to befriend someone who is handicapped - something to think about). The reason God used the four friends is because they cared for this paralyzed man. Just like those four, the evangelistic mission of our church needs to start with love.

The number one reason Christians don't share Christ with others is that they are too preoccupied with themselves. Before you can care about others, you must become aware of them. Once you become aware of those who don't have a relationship with Christ, you should start praying for them and befriending them.

2. This man was disabled by a disease. But let me ask you this? How many friends do you have that have been "disabled" by the disease known as sin? No one is hopeless. When the four friends looked at the paralytic's condition, they could have responded in doubt: Instead, they believed God could heal him – they had faith. The Bible said the paralytic's sins were forgiven when Jesus saw the faith of the four friends. There are people paralyzed in our world who aren't necessarily physically paralyzed but who have a paralyzed faith. Whether they're paralyzed by doubts, loneliness, fear or anything else, the result is the same – they need the faith of others who will befriend them. In a sense, they don't have enough faith to believe, so your faith is going to have to bring them to Jesus.

3. FACT. Most people in the kingdom of God today are there because of the influence of a family member or friend who left their comfort zone, and be-friended someone and introduced them to Jesus.

4. Witnessing is nothing less than imitating Jesus who was charged and found guilty of being a friend to sinners. Jesus is this intimate friend!

II. Christian Witness Requires Some Innovation

1. Although faith and prayer are important ingredients to bringing others to Jesus, you need to do something too. You need a plan. When the four friends saw the way to Jesus was blocked, they came up with a plan to get their friend to Jesus. We have a plan to bring people to Jesus. It begins by you praying (using the info given today). Then inviting someone to come with you to Alpha (or inviting someone to church).

2. One of these four guys went out, got three other guys and together they carry the man to the house where Jesus is teaching and healing (TEAMWORK! - Have you ever tried to carry someone on a stretcher with only three people? It doesn't work. If all four of the friends hadn't helped, the paralytic would have fallen off the stretcher. Some people will only come to Jesus through a group effort. Studies have shown that people come to Christ faster when they come through a supportive environment. That's why Alpha or any small group is so essential in bringing people to Christ. When you talk to someone at work, and it's just you and that person, you're the only witness. If you're able to bring them to a group event – particularly one that is fun – they'll go, "Wow, these people aren't goofy. They aren't religious nuts. They're normal people.")

3. But when they arrived they found a great crowd. "Excuse me, would you let me through? YEAH RIGHT?" Man, this is impossible. Too many barriers too big of a task!

4. But at least one of them, in a moment creatively and innovation said: WAIT. How about if we take him on the roof and let him down with ropes. These four friends decided to do something different to get their friend to Jesus, they went through the roof!

Sometimes we have to do something different to get people to Jesus as well.

5. They could have found a reason to not do it: "What will the house owner think?. what will Jesus think? Maybe it's not meant for us to bring him to Jesus, if it were Jesus would find a way to reach him or the crowd would part. When the four friends saw the

path to Jesus blocked, they had every reason to feel discouraged, but they didn't give up. They looked for another way to bring the man to Jesus. Everybody gets discouraged at times. But in order to share Jesus with our friends, we must persist through those difficulties. (don't give up praying and sharing Christ with friends/ family.) We must think like these four guys: Whatever it takes , we've got to get our friend into the presence of Jesus.

III. Christian Witness Expresses Faith

1. These four men wouldn't have made a hole in the roof unless they were willing to fix it. They had to pay the cost of bringing their friend to Jesus. Bringing a friend to Jesus always requires sacrifice. For many that means sacrificing their own comfort. Before our community will come to Jesus, they need to see those in our congregations get out of their comfort zones. It takes unselfish people to reach others for Christ and make a church grow. Each of these friends had faith in Jesus.

2. How do we know this? Look at Mark 2:3-5 (the) Four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. 4 They couldn't get to Jesus through the crowd, so they dug through the clay roof above his head. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Jesus saw their faith. This is the one thing these four or five nameless men had in common, faith in Jesus, and Jesus saw it...not in words but in their actions. It wasn't what Jesus heard that moved Him to forgive and heal. It was what He saw.

3. The Christian witness is the one who is convinced that if they can just somehow get their friend in the presence of Jesus that Jesus has the power to heal, is the authority to forgive sins and that this carpenter from Nazareth is Lord...the answer!

4. Which leads one to conclude that the most effective form of witness is simply this: make a friend and when the opportunity avails itself, simply tell them about Jesus and what he has done for you.