

Touched by Jesus- Paralytic

I have more recently, over the last few years, taken much notice in my study of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that Jesus seemed to, as much as His humanity allowed, conduct a very diversified ministry. Those whom He taught, healed, forgave, ministered to, and cast out demons were from all kinds of different backgrounds, vocations, personal history, gender, race and age. That was specifically observed and mentioned numerous times in scripture.

Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't just target twenty-somethings with fast camels and median incomes of 2-3 denarii per day? Aren't you glad the gospel was not just for the elite, or the talented, the rich, famous, or powerful? Aren't you glad God so loved the world?

The man whose life was touched by Jesus that we're studying today was definitely not among the up and coming, the who's who of Capernaum. He not only was not among the up and coming, he couldn't even get up! He was paralyzed. He totally relied on family and friends to even get through the basic functions of the day. Let's read his story.

1 When He entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that He was at home. **2** So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and He was speaking the message to them. **3** Then they came to Him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. **4** Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying. **5** Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** **6** But some of the scribes were sitting there, thinking to themselves: **7** **“Why does He speak like this? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** **8** Right away Jesus understood in His spirit that they were reasoning like this within themselves and said to them, **“Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? **9** Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your stretcher, and walk’? **10** But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”** He told the paralytic, **11** **“I tell you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.”** **12** Immediately he got up, picked up the stretcher, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, **“We have never seen anything like this!”** Mark 2:1-12 (HCSB)

Try to picture this event in your mind? Jesus was home. He had moved His base of operations to Capernaum and apparently had secured the use of some home or building. He was teaching/preaching in the house and the place was packed out.

The four friends of the paralytic had heard Jesus was in town and decided to take their buddy to meet the healer. They loaded him up, but by the time they arrived, there were so many there that one person couldn't even get in the door much less four men carrying a stretcher.

The friends, with a combination of great compassion for their friend, commitment to getting their friend to Jesus and profound creativity, climbed on top of the roof with their friend on the stretcher, estimated about where Jesus would be standing, and began to tear the roof apart. They continued to do so until they had opened up a hole big enough to lower the entire stretcher down horizontally. This hole had to have been around 3' by 7'.

Jesus had probably coughed quite a few of times from the dust that began to fall and eventually even dodging some roof debris, but He kept on preaching as if nothing was happening. But just like when someone gets up to go to the bathroom or water fountain, all attention eventually turned upward as the compassionate, committed, creative friends began lowering their friend through the roof to where Jesus was standing.

Jesus stopped preaching, knowing and observing their faith, and addressed the man's greatest need. This greatest need was not that of healing but of forgiveness. He offered him forgiveness for his sins. Jesus did heal the man but He healed him so that the man, his friends, and the crowd would know that He had the authority to forgive sins. That was Jesus' ultimate purpose on earth- to seek and save the lost.

1 When He entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that He was at home.
Mark 2:1 (HCSB)

Jesus had entered Capernaum a number of times because it had become His ministry center. Capernaum was located on the northern shore of the Sea (lake) of Galilee not too far from where the Jordan river flows into the Sea of Galilee. Apparently Jesus and the disciples had secured some type of home or building to stay in and minister out of while they were in town.

2 So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and He was speaking the message to them.

3 Then they came to Him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. Mark 2:3-4 (HCSB)

Complaint committee:

Inadequate facilities- no restrooms, no nursery, no children's church, no greeters, no camel parking, no chairs, no room!

Should have scheduled multiple services

No handicapped access

Fire exits not marked

Unfriendly

No music (solved the worship style problem)

Distracting noise during message

Doors blocked

Needed a sound system

Preacher was uneducated

With all these distractions and imperfections, why didn't everyone stomp out of there angry and disillusioned? They wanted to hear the words of God. All of those other things, as notably imperfect and disruptive as they were, paled in significance to just being in the same room with the Master, hearing His words, and being changed by His message.

Fact: It took four people part of one day to bring one friend to Jesus.

In 2008, on average throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, the most evangelistic denomination in the world, it took 47 pastors, deacons, and members of local churches one year to make one disciple and baptize him or her. At New Hope last year it took 17 of us a year to make one disciple and baptize him or her. Don't get too excited....

What has happened since that day in Palestine? How have we gone from four men spending part of a day to bring their friend to Jesus (Granted, the friend was paralyzed and didn't have a choice) to it taking 47 or even 17 people a year to make one disciple? Are we lacking compassion, commitment or creativity?

4 Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying. Mark 2:4 (HCSB)

You have got to admire the tenacity and creativity of these four men. They didn't give up. They didn't stand around outside for the next hour complaining about the facilities, the uncaring, unfriendly people or Jesus. They put all their time and energy into figuring out how to get their friend to Jesus, and they did it!

5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** Mark 2:5 (HCSB)

How disappointed they must have been! They wanted their friend healed and all Jesus offered was forgiveness.

6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, thinking to themselves: **7** **“Why does He speak like this? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** Mark 2:6-7 (HCSB)

Actually, they were correct. He was blaspheming. Only God can forgive sins. Unless.....Jesus really was God.

8 Right away Jesus understood in His spirit that they were reasoning like this within themselves and said to them, **“Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your stretcher, and walk’? 10 But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”** He told the paralytic, **11 “I tell you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.”** Mark 2:8-11 (HCSB)

What was the greater need of this man: Healing or forgiveness? What was Jesus primary purpose in coming to earth: Heal or offer forgiveness of sins? Why then did He spend so much time healing? Had Jesus only offered forgiveness of sins, claimed to be the son of God, equal with God, and God Himself, He would have been laughed out of town before the first week of His ministry had ended. The miracles gave credibility to His claims about Himself and what He came to do.

12 Immediately he got up, picked up the stretcher, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” Mark 2:12 (HCSB)

He had a lot of trouble getting in the church but I bet he had no trouble getting out! When he picked up his stretcher and turned to the door, I imagine a wide path suddenly opened up as if he were a person of great honor and respect. Can you imagine the excitement? Can you picture the worship as they gave glory to God?

You can be **Touched by Jesus:**

Complain all you want. Go right ahead. There’s plenty that’s not right with this church and any and every church on the planet. But I would guess that close to 99.999% of the complaining, whining and griping that goes on in most churches today, including this one, are about as worthwhile and likely to move God to some positive action as the Israelites whining about the giants in the land of Canaan that God intended to give to them. Remember, everyone 21 and older died in the desert.

9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 1 Peter 4:9 (HCSB)

That’s what not do to. If you want to miss out on any and every opportunity to be transformed, complain. Why not try, instead of complaining, being **creative** like the four friends of the paralytic. Solve problems. Be an agent of positive solutions.

Be creative. There are always going to be obstacles in and out of the church that may be in the way of bringing your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to Jesus. Instead of complaining, try praying. Then, seek the Lord’s help in creatively, positively overcoming these physical and emotional barriers to faith and prosperity in the Lord’s church. I admit that it is a lot easier to complain. It is an easy habit to fall into. All it takes is a few words and you’re on your way. But it’s a bad habit.

I believe that within this congregation there is enough creativity, talent, courage, and most of all faith to impact Cape Coral and beyond for the kingdom of Christ even in this very secular, self-serving culture that we find ourselves in today..... Who was the most changed by this encounter with Jesus, the paralytic or his friends?

Bring friends to Jesus. If you are not regularly bringing friends to Jesus, you forfeit your right to criticize the church. **Don’t bring up the insignificant if you’re failing in the significant.**

The most important, most significant thing any and each of us who are already born again have to do in the church today is bring people to Jesus. You don't have to preach the sermon or even teach a class. Just bring your friends to Jesus. You will be changed when you bring a friend to Jesus. You'll never be the same.

Give glory to God. God forgives. God heals. He deserves all glory.