

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 6 May 2018
Speaker: Mike Levy
Title: Meet Jesus - Jesus and the paralytic
Read: Mark 2 verses 1-12

Introduction:

Part of the series on Meet Jesus

Crowded House

When Jesus goes back to Capernaum he drew a huge crowd, split into two. Those who had heard about him, what he was saying and what he was doing and were drawn to see for themselves what he was about, and the Pharisees - a non-priestly group of people whose duty was to keep the nation faithful to the rules they had developed around Mosaic Law. They saw the world as black and white - full of binary choices.

The Healing

This was a turning point in the ministry of Jesus, because the point of this healing was first spiritual rather than physical. A group of people brought their friend to Jesus, neither they nor the paralytic spoke to Jesus, the man was just lowered into his presence. It was Jesus' response to this physical demonstration of faith that caused him to say, "your sins are forgiven". The physical healing followed the spiritual healing to show that Jesus had authority in the spiritual world. The whole healing was Jesus led.

Confusion?

I wonder if the friends and the paralytic were confused by the fact that Jesus at first did not heal physically? Surely this was not what they were expecting? For Jesus to heal physically was a gift for now, for Jesus to heal spiritually was a gift for eternity. As for the Pharisees their world was being challenged, they did not speak but Jesus knew their thoughts (scary!) and asked them a key question "which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat and walk."

Jesus is God or Jesus is a conman

Jesus gives the Pharisees a binary choice - something they should love in their black and white world! They knew that only God could forgive sins, so the only way that Jesus could make that statement was if he were the son of God. The alternative was that he was a conman. Anyone can say "your sins are forgiven" because we cannot see what is on the inside of a person - where is the evidence. So, Jesus heals the paralytic physically as proof. Jesus 1 Pharisees 0. From the point of view of the Pharisees the paralytic would be paralytic because of sin in his life, Jesus made no such assertion, so when Jesus heals physically the Pharisees are stumped by their own logic. Jesus 2 Pharisees 0.

The Friends

This story tells us a lot about friendship and church. Whatever church is about it is about bringing people to meet Jesus. We are told that there was a group of friends from whom four carried the friend on a mattress. Bringing people to meet Jesus is a community activity. Think of climbing Mt Everest, the one or two who get to the summit only get there because of the many who plan, do the logistics, carry the equipment etc. The paralytic only gets healed because of the actions of many who showed the following characteristics:

- They **cared** enough to bring their friend to Jesus. They did not give in to the prevailing view of his condition, that he was an outcast and a sinner, they wanted him to have a better life.
- They **persisted**. The journey, the crowd, the stairs to the roof and the roof itself did not put them off, they were going to get the job done.
- They showed **teamwork** who knows what part they each played on the journey but carrying someone on a mattress, upstairs, making a hole in the roof and lowering him down takes teamwork.

Challenge

The challenge to us is to be good friends, to care and be persistent in bringing our friends to Jesus, and to do so as part of our community of faith. To be mattress carriers and if not mattress carriers then part of the wider support group.

Reflection

1. What would it be like if we lived out our faith in a black and white world of a rulebook? Would it be easier or more difficult? What would we gain and what would we lose?
2. Jesus is either the Son of God or a conman. How far is this simple choice true today?
3. Discuss cases when you have come to Jesus expecting something from him, but he has done something else. How did you feel at the time? How do you feel now? How easy is it to accept that God's perspective may be different from your perspective?
4. Have you had times, in discussion with others, when you have been able to express such clear logic as Jesus did with the pharisees - what was the situation and what was the outcome?
5. Church is about bringing people to Jesus - Discuss.
6. What can we do, as community, to help you bring your friends to meet Jesus?
7. How much do you care that your friends meet Jesus?
8. How hard is it to be persistent in bringing your friends to meet Jesus?
9. Who are you carrying on a mattress, or supporting others to carry on a mattress, now? What are the issues you face? Where do you need help? How might you receive help?

Pray

Pray for one another in your efforts to be friends who bring friend to Jesus.

Pray for your friends who you want to meet Jesus. Be specific, name them, name the issues - but keep confidentiality within your group.

Follow up

Remember to share with each other again in the weeks to come, continue to pray for the people you have names, support each other.