

**The Power of Faith in Carrying a Stretcher**  
**“Your sins are forgiven...rise, pick up your bed...”**  
**Mark 2:1-12 (ESV)**

Review elements of the passage as it is read. There is a lot going on in this story:

- Jesus is home and many have gathered to listen to His teaching.
- the house is full and the audience is made up of friends and enemies.
- four men arrive with someone on a stretcher but they cannot get him into the house due to the crowd.
- they climb up on the roof and, after cutting a hole in it, lower the man down to the floor so he is positioned right in front of Jesus. He forgives the man's sins.
- the enemies of Jesus begin to think critical thoughts about Jesus and this “forgiveness” that He gives.
- Jesus hears their thoughts and uses them to set the stage for a miracle.
- Jesus tells the man to pick up the stretcher and go home. Though he has never walked in his life, he gets up, picks up the stretcher and walks out of the house.
- the people are “amazed, astounded, out of their minds, insane, confounded, beside one's self”; “We never saw anything like this!” - ...they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. - And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

Three very important lessons are taught in this text:

- The man is physically and relationally healed- God heals all manner of sickness!
- The man's sins are forgiven- God forgives every kind of sin!
- Jesus declares that He is God (cf. 2:7-11)

In most commentaries and sermons, the emphasis is rightly on Jesus' teaching on His claim to be able to forgive sin, on the healing miracle He performs and His claim to be God. But the reason that Jesus could speak these words as well as forgive and heal this man is as important;

➤ **Read Mark 2:5** “And when Jesus saw their faith...”

Who are these four men and what can they teach us about exercising faith in such a way that our friends and family can be touched by Jesus? Can they teach us how to carry a stretcher?

**Who Are These Men and Why Did They Get Together?**

- We don't know who they are but we do know that;
  1. They really loved their friend. They cared for him.

2. They worked together for his good.
  3. They really believed in Jesus and they had faith that He would heal their friend. Their faith was evident by their actions.
- But where is this man's family? Why are they not carrying him or with him?
  - It may be that the paralyzed man rejected by his family. If so,
    1. Perhaps they struggled with embarrassment or personal shame. Maybe they held the view of sickness and disability that is seen in John 9:1-2; "...who sinned, this man or his parents?" Family secrets and pretending
    2. Perhaps the financial and personal impact of severe disability was another reason for rejection of one they were to love, care for and celebrate as a member of their family.
    3. Perhaps they did not have the faith needed to carry him to Jesus.
  - How tragic that family are not with him but in their absence, his friends carry him. Praise Jesus that the family of God can stand in the gap for us!

### **Where Do We Begin? What Can We Learn About Carrying a Stretcher?**

- It begins with love for people  
Love for their friend. This is the beginning of stretcher-bearing.
- Faith in Jesus  
Faith that Jesus can do something and he will do something. In our passage: healing plus salvation and restoration
- We must make a decision...they decided to carry their friend to Jesus but they had choices:
  1. We sure hope he gets to see Jesus someday...
  2. Maybe we can get Jesus to come by to see him...
  3. Let's pray that Jesus will heal him...
  4. Nothing can be done to heal him...

### **Caring is Costly and Complicated**

- We must be willing to pay a personal price...
  1. They had their schedules and obligations.
  2. They had to find the house where Jesus was staying.
  3. They had to physically carry their friend on the stretcher to the house.
  4. They had to be creative and probably pay the price their "creativity." If Moses would have had to solve the problem of the Red Sea first, he would have never left Egypt.
  5. They had to be willing to risk being misunderstood or even unsuccessful. What if Jesus doesn't heal our friend?

## **Jesus' Love and Power Saves, Heals and Delivers their Friend**

- The man's sins have been forgiven! (cf. 2:5) This is always the most important and substantial miracle.
- The man is physically healed! Consider what it means that "*he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all*" (cf. 2:12 ESV)
- Jesus calls him Son (τέκνον; cf. 2:5) and He told the man to go to his HOME (cf. 2:11; Matthew 9:6-7, Luke 5:24-25) Perhaps Jesus is healing and restoring a family!

## **When Jesus Responds...Celebrate!**

- What do you imagined happened when the saved and healed man walked out of the house? I'm sure he was met by the four men who brought him to Jesus. And imagine what that meeting was like!
- What do you imagine happened when this saved and healed man arrived at his home? The beginning of healed relationships, a witness of Jesus power and rejoicing.
- We must be ready to thank Him and to celebrate when Jesus responds to our faith and it wonderful to celebrate with the one who has been ministered to by Jesus!

Every time someone has had faith and cared enough to be involved in our lives, they join others as they carry us on our stretcher to Jesus- the only One who can transform our lives.

Every time we add our faith to our care for someone and get involved in their life, we with others carry them to the only One who can heal, deliver, renew, restore and save.

The Holy Spirit is reminding us that "*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*" (1 Peter 4:10)

Stretcher Slide: Let's live out our faith and show that we really care by becoming a stretcher-bearer.