

## People of the Book: The Paralytic's Friends

Luke 5:17-26

June 27, 2010

He's been like this for a long time...too long. Do you remember when we were younger and we'd swim in the sea together? The five of us had such fun. I still remember the day that we had hiked to an area of the shore that we had never been to before. There was a high rock and we decided to have a diving contest. He wanted to go first. It was the silliest dive I've ever seen. As we stood there and laughed, you were the first to realize that he hadn't come up from under the water yet.

Everything changed that day. It turned out that there was a rock under the water that we couldn't see. He had hit the rock and broken his neck. He was lucky that he wasn't killed. But ever since then he's been paralyzed – can't feed himself or anything. He can only lie on that mat. We go and spend time with him when we can...to take care of him and cheer up his day.

He's been like this for too long. What would you think of taking him to that teacher and healer, Jesus? I've spent some time around him and I'm convinced that the power of God is great with him. He's in a house down the street right now. Let's go get him, but it will take all four of us to carry him.

You know the rest of the story. The men end up lowering their friend through the roof down to Jesus. And, "seeing their faith," Jesus healed the paralytic.

Many people don't recognize or come into contact with God through the front door. Some people come through the back door, some come through the window, and some literally come through the roof. Some people come to Christ on their own, but many times they are so broken that they cannot find their way to him by themselves. They need someone to take them. They need you.

The paralytic was healed not because of his own faith, rather he was healed as a result of the faith of the friends who loved him enough to bring him into the presence of the Christ. Maybe you were introduced to Christ by someone who loved you. Perhaps you were broken in spirit, and it took the strong faith of someone else to carry you into the healing presence of Jesus.

Perhaps you can think of someone right now who, as you sit here this morning, is paralyzed in life. They are paralyzed emotionally or spiritually – they can't seem to move toward wholeness on their own. Exercise your own faith and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you can do to help carry them to Christ. Believe for them when they are unable to believe for themselves.

Jesus healed the paralytic man because he saw the great faith of the friends. We're not told that Jesus credited the faith of the friends to the man who lay before him; the man had whatever faith he may have had, or not had. However, the Father takes it a step further with us.

Each of us comes to the Father broken and not able to help ourselves – paralyzed in sin. And just like the man's friends, the crucified and risen Christ picks us up and presents us to the Father. He presents us, not so that we can be healed of any physical malady, but so we can be made spiritually whole again...so that we can be reconciled with the Father. When the Father looks at those who come to him through Christ, he sees a person who is righteous. It is not the person's own righteousness that God sees, but the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to the sinner.

Imputation is a legal term meaning "to reckon as" and refers to a type of judgment in which the quality of one person is ascribed to another. When we enter into a faith relationship with Christ, and he presents us before the Father for judgment, the Father imputes the righteousness of Christ to us, and we are declared righteous. It is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us that cancels our sin nature and allows us to enter into the presence of God forever. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us is just another example of God's grace at work in our lives.

As we receive grace, so we also are called to demonstrate grace. You and I cannot save the souls of our friends, only Christ can do that. However, we can carry them into his presence as an act of grace. Our faith in Christ on behalf of our friends and family should manifest itself in resolute, persistent and conspicuous action. How can we carry them to Christ?

Pray for someone who needs healing and salvation. Talk to them about your faith and the difference a relationship with Christ has made in your life. Bring them to church. [Notice we are not told that the paralytic's friends invited him to go with them, they just took him. Just tell someone that you would like for them to go to church with you and that you will pick them up.] Invite them to a social or fellowship event with other Christians. Invite them to join the church's softball team. There are any number of ways that you can begin introducing someone to Christ. Just use your imagination.

Don't ever think that what you do does not matter or is not significant. It doesn't take much to impact someone for Christ. It was just a little gesture from a fellow snow boarder that got Kelly Clark to thinking about God. Kelly, a 2002 Olympic gold medal winner and member of the 2010 U.S. Olympic snowboarding team in Vancouver, discovered that success does not bring lasting fulfillment. During a competition in 2004 she overheard a fellow competitor encouraging a person who failed to qualify say, "Hey, it's all right. God still loves you." When she went back to her hotel room, Kelly began to read the Bible she found in the nightstand, but wasn't sure what she was reading. That's when she walked down the hall and knocked on the girl's door who

had spoken earlier. Kelly introduced herself and said, “I think you might be a Christian, and I think you need to tell me about God.” Her snowboarding colleague carried her into the presence of Christ as she talked to her about a relationship with Jesus as her Savior. As a result of the graceful act of a friend Kelly Clark became a Christian.

Your words and actions have the ability to speak hope into the lives of people. How are you helping people to see and know Jesus?