

At the Feet of Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] I just want to thank you for joining us here as I pray that today's message will bless you and allow God to work in your lives. My name is Mitch Sefton. I'm the youth pastor here at the First Christian Church. I don't know about you guys, but I am so ready for our summer break to start. For those of you that don't know, summer is the absolute busiest time in youth ministry, and we aren't even meeting on a regular basis. We met as a group a few times over the summer, but between our camps and our vacation Bible school and our strawberry shortcake booth out at the county fair, summer gets pretty chaotic and busy. And I just want to say, take some time today to say thank you to those of you that have helped out with youth ministry, and also just to give you a quick update about kind of the things that we've had going on this summer and what's going on in the life of our youth ministry here at FCC. You see, the first week of the summer, we took eight young men to Mahoning Valley Christian Service Camp. This was a great experience for our kids to be able to experience camp and to be able to be immersed in the life of camp for the week. Our theme this year at Mahoning Valley was rooted and how we can be rooted in our relationship with Jesus. Another main focus for that particular week was the fruits of the Spirit and how we can truly focus on how to allow these to be tangible in our lives and becoming more Christ-like. A second week, we went ahead and took our kids' putt-putt right here in Greensburg, and then we took them to the branch to get a drink as well. And so we had a great time doing fellowship and just hanging out and having a lot of fun. I'm going to go on a limb to say we're probably not going to have any professional putt-putt players based on what I saw when we went out to the putt-putt here in Greensburg. And then the following week, we hosted Vacation Bible School. It was such a blessing to see our kids in the building and so many young people here. But something that is really exciting to me as a youth pastor is to see so many of our youth group kids serving at VBS. You see, one of the things that we talk about in youth group is multi-generational discipleship and just basically just this idea of junior high and senior high students pouring into the kids of our children's ministry. We want our youth group kids to be a great example of Christ's love for our elementary students. And for many of them, they chose to do this during Vacation Bible School Week. I got a quote from one of our students in youth ministry, Mila Wenzel, and she says this, VBS is a joyous week led by God where mentors get the opportunity to ignite a passion within children to discover a life of Jesus. Yet children also help mentors rediscover life with a childlike faith. I love that so much that we have kids in our youth ministry that are so passionate about serving Christ through our children's ministry. And then we jump ahead to the last week of June. Our high school students went for an entire week to a

Christ in Youth conference at Bowling Green State University over in Ohio. You see, this was an awesome experience for them to grow closer together and to dive deep into their relationship with Jesus. The theme for CIY this summer was nevertheless, which comes from the scripture in Galatians 2:20 where it says from the King James Version, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. You see, CIY is something that our church is so passionate about getting students to because we have attended this for so many years. And we've seen lives that have been changed, lives that have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We've watched kids accept a call into full-time ministry. We have seen friendships form. We have watched relationships deepen. And we have seen even a few couples come out of CIY that are still together today.

Our heart is taking these students, of taking these students to these types of events is for them to be able to grab onto something in their walk with Jesus and to grow in that particular walk. I also love that they're on a college campus and it just gives them a small glimpse of what life as a college

student might look like for our high school students. You see, on a personal level, the month of June was super exciting as well. We saw the month of June come with lots of highs and even some lows in the day-to-day that we have. You see, as many of you already know because you were here on Father's Day or you saw what happened on Father's Day, we have been talking about baptism with our 12-year-old Eliah for quite some time. And we had no idea he surprised us all that on Father's Day he chose to go forward and give his confession of faith. And I was actually playing the drums in the praise band that particular Sunday. And in the drum booth, there is a pillar that sits right next to it. And there's a blind spot where you can't see a portion of the sanctuary. So I see Eliah stand up in the back of the sanctuary and begin to walk forward. And then he disappears. And I'm anticipating maybe he's going to be coming through the doors to go to the bathroom or something like that in the Holy Grounds area.

But he disappears and he doesn't reappear. And so then I'm sitting behind this pillar just kind of trying to look around as I'm playing the song still. And I finally get a glimpse of Pastor Ray standing up front and Eliah standing right next to him. And as soon as that song was over, I could not get down there fast enough. Tears were just streaming down my face. And he gives his confession of faith that day. And then Courtney, my wife and I, we had the blessing of getting to baptize our son into the body of Christ the following Sunday. See, most of our family had the opportunity to be there. But on that same day, my youngest brother, Alex, and his wife had their first son. And so we had a chance to celebrate both a birth and a rebirth on that day. And then on that same day, Eliah left for his first full week at Mahoning Valley Christian Service Camp. And he absolutely loved being out there.

And that was so awesome to be able to do that. And then the following day is when I left for CIY, which I've already talked to you about. You see, we had about a two week window from the time I got home from CIY until the time when the fair was going to be starting with we do our strawberry shortcake booth. And so rather than taking time to rest from our busy June, what we did is we took time to have our annual garage sale. And we also went on a family vacation. You see, most of you probably think the month of June, man, they must have been exhausted. They probably need to just take time to unplug and stop and rest, go lay on a beach somewhere, sit around a pool somewhere. [6:37] Well, we pretty much did the exact opposite. We chose to road trip. We started our trip on July 6th with Dude Perfect in Columbus, Ohio. For those of you that don't know who that is, I would highly advise going and checking these guys out. They are awesome. Our whole family enjoys watching them.

They are YouTubers that love Jesus, and they use this particular platform to use to share the love of Christ with others. At the end of every one of their events in these big stadiums that they're filling, they take time to give their testimonies and just share scripture with the people that are coming. You see, once we left there, we went on to Detroit, and we caught a Tigers game against the Toronto Blue Jays. And then after that particular game, my wife and I, we celebrated our anniversary on July the 8th. This would be 17 years of marriage together, and we're so excited to have that opportunity. And I would love to say that those first couple hours of our anniversary were spent going over all the amazing memories that we have created over those 17 years, or, you know, just gazing into one another's eyes like, you know, in love couples do. But what we did is a part of our story for this particular vacation is that we forgot something very important. We didn't forget any of our children. We didn't forget any of our luggage. None of those kinds of things. Those were good things to remember as well. But we did forget to change our cell phones from domestic to international.

So we launch into this foreign country, and Aiden is taking a picture of the United States-Canada border as we're going through the tunnel between Detroit and Canada. And as we take the picture, he tries to hit send to send it out to our family chat so they can all know exactly where we are, the whole and so forth. And we get the message, cannot be delivered. Like, oh no, what's going on? We figured it was because we were just in the tunnel and we just didn't have reception. Well, needless to say, we realized once we got across the border and none of our cell phones were working that we forgot to change it to the international. So we launch ourselves into this foreign country with no cell service, no way of getting a hold of anyone, and no way of reading our GPS because it was delayed. So we did have a little bit of a map, but not enough to where it was easy for us to be able to get around a foreign country in the first couple hours of our anniversary. So I would love to say that we spent those first couple hours just in awe of each other. But I will say that it was

more frustration, anger, and probably a little bit of fear of the unknown that played a huge role in those first couple hours of our anniversary. But it's a great story to tell now. Once we got through there safely, we finally got to our destination of London, Ontario, Canada. We ended up going up to Niagara Falls for a couple days. And then we came back down through Erie, Pennsylvania, stopped at Lake Erie and spent a day on the beach. And then we came on back home, did a Ninja Warrior course while we were on our trip. And then we also stopped at the Lego Discovery Center in Columbus, Ohio. And we had a great trip. It was one that we'll remember for forever. And we loved that, but we were so busy.

And in the six days that we were gone, we spent about 22 hours of windshield time. And so needless to say, I was tired. And then we got back and the next day was our strawberry cutting day for the fair.

So before I dive into any of the next part, I just want to take a moment just to stop and say thank you so much from the bottom of my heart and from our students here in our youth ministry, for any of you that cut strawberries, for any of you that served at the fair, for any of you that helped set up or tear down, for any of you that came and bought strawberry shortcakes. But this is such a huge part of our ministry and allowing us to be able to do the things that we like to do in the FCC youth ministry life. So now you understand what I meant at the beginning when I say I'm ready for my summer to begin. And I know that I'm not the only one that feels this way. I know that a lot of you have had crazy schedules as well. And I know that I'm not the only person that puts so much on my plate that I can't even focus on what's the most important. I had so many quote unquote good things that I miss out on the great things sometimes. You see, I'm going to be totally transparent with you. When I say that for me, a real struggle in ministry or in my life is focusing so much on everyone else's need to know Jesus that sometimes my relationship with him often suffers. I encourage others to allow him to pour into you. I encourage others to take time to stop and listen to see what [11:12] Christ really has in store for your life. But what Satan does in my life is he uses my busyness as a weapon against me. And I recognize that. You see, I've studied through this particular passage and God has used it to minister to me just as much as I hope and pray that he uses it to minister to you.

You see, God has created us for relationship. Our schedules do not allow us to focus on these relationships the way that they need to be fostered. He has created us to be first and foremost in relationship with the Savior of the world. He loves us and wants us to be, wants to be close to us. He says in Matthew chapter 11 verses 28 and 29, it says, Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. And it says in 1 John chapter 4 verse 19, we love him because he first loved us. You see, God wants to be in relationship with us. He has also called us to be in close relationship with your spouse if you have one, with your children if you have them, and also to be in close relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. One of my favorite things about First Christian Church is going into the Holy Grounds Cafe on a Sunday morning and just watching conversations happen and seeing people fellowship together and smiling and laughing and having a muffin or having a cinnamon roll, having a cup of coffee or for me, just for you like me, having a little bit of all of it.

But it's so exciting to watch that happening right here at FCC. You see, last year at the end of our school year, we did what was probably my favorite series that we have done possibly ever in my time of youth ministry. What we did is we just took the life of Christ and we chose stories out of scripture about his particular life or about his particular ministry. And some of my leaders, they also had a chance to deliver messages, but I had a chance to deliver quite a few of them as well. And what we did is we just chose that passage that was our favorite passage of the life of Christ. And then we just taught on what that was. And we dove right into that scripture and just broke it down. And our kids had a chance to do that as well. But at the end of the year, one of the stories that I love the most and the one that I enjoyed teaching on the most was that of that of the paralyzed man. You see, what happened was in this particular situation is this particular story can be found in multiple gospels, but we're going to take a look at it today from the book of Luke. We're going to be in chapter five, verses 17 through 26. So if you want to take a moment just to turn there, that's where we're going to be camping out for majority of our time. You see, there's going to be some parts that I'm going to reference that will come from the other accounts of the stories, but just know that we'll be camping out in Luke today for majority of our time together. There's so much to

understand in this particular passage, and there's so many different ways that you can tackle the study of it. You can look at it from that of the person listening to Jesus's messages. You can look at it from the Pharisee. You can look at it from the passerby. You can look at it from the disciple. You can look at it from the paralyzed man. However, we're going to take a look at it from three different perspectives today, and we're going to talk through those as we get through the rest of this message. You see, these are the types of friends that we need that we're going to be reading about, and these are the types of friends that we should desire to be. The ones that go to extreme measures to make sure that the ones that they love are the ones that are going to be bold and Christ-like because of who Jesus is. But before we dive into the scriptures today, what I'm going to ask you to do is let's just take just a moment and let's pray before we read God's holy scripture. Father, we love you. We thank you for the blessing of this day. We thank you for just your grace and your mercy, and we thank you for the power that you give us through your holy scriptures, and we thank you for miracles. We thank you for the story of the healing of the paralyzed man, and I thank you for his friends. I thank you for just their boldness, Father. I pray, Lord, that as we just dive into the scripture, that it just comes alive to the people that are reading it and the people that are listening, and I pray, Lord, that we can just find who you've called us to be and just be bold the way that these friends were. Father, we thank you for Jesus in his name. Amen. Starting in verse 17, it says,

One day Jesus was teaching, and the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him to the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. See, when he saw their faith, he said to them, Friend, your sins are forgiven. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven? Or to say, Get up and walk.

[16 : 32] But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the paralyzed man, I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home. Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been laying on, and went home praising God.

Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, We have seen remarkable things today. As I read this scripture, I tried to paint a picture in my mind or watch a movie in my mind to help me understand exactly what it is that was going on.

I think about this scene and how Jesus is surrounded by people that were skeptical of him, that felt he was a threat to their religious beliefs. The Pharisee had come from many different places to see this spectacle that Jesus was causing and waiting for him to trip up so that they could nail him for something.

You see, like I said, we're going to tackle this particular passage from three different perspectives. The first group of people that we're going to look at it from is that of the Pharisee. I just want to take a moment just to remind you that the Pharisee were the religious leaders of their time.

They were the group of men that knew the Old Testament and its laws literally by heart. To get to this point, to be a Pharisee, you would have had to have studied from a very, very young age to continue to progress to the point of becoming a leader in the Jewish faith.

[17 : 57] The Pharisees were worried because of what Jesus was teaching. These men saw the importance of trying to stop Jesus and did not allow the busyness of their lives to stop them.

They wanted him to trip up, say something he shouldn't, do something that he shouldn't do, fail to be the person that people were saying he was. They found it important enough to stop what they were doing to go and take care of this situation that Jesus was causing.

You see, they were literally sitting in the same room as the Savior of the world and missed it because they were too caught up in what they thought they knew rather than the truth. You see, so many of us are in that very similar situation that we know the information but miss out on the relationship.

Like we've said, Jesus desires to have a relationship with each and every one of us. He loves us despite our flaws and imperfections. To do a little self-reflection, do you come to church on a Sunday morning knowing you are worshiping the Savior of the world or do you come to church for

other motives?

Possible examples would be just to see your friends. Is church a social club for you? Is it to eat in the Holy Grounds Cafe? Have one of those muffins or cinnamon rolls, a cup of coffee?

[19 : 19] Do you become a skeptic waiting to jump on the first thing that doesn't sound right? Or is it an expectation because your parents drag you here? It is important for us when we come to service on a Sunday morning that we focus on those relationships, we pour into each other, but most importantly that when we hear that we don't miss out, when we are here that we don't miss out on Christ Himself because of everything else.

You see, we as believers in Christ need to have people that hold us accountable and help us in our walk, but when the church becomes so legalistic that we only look for what things that are being done wrong, and it becomes very detrimental to both the local church and also to the body of Christ. We have to love the way that Christ loves. The second group of people that we're going to talk about today I like to call the group of people called the passerby, the window shopper, if you will, the person that is curious but doesn't really have a lot of interest in what is truly going on, but they just want to be a part of something or want to know what's going on in this particular moment.

This passage does not speak directly to this group of people, but we can only assume based on what we are hearing and reading in the scriptures of the description of the crowd. The busyness of the life of the passerby was able to take a short break just to see what was going on.

They wondered enough to see if this was something that they truly wanted to stick around for. You see, many of the people probably knew that they had at least seen or heard something about this particular paralyzed man.

[20 : 54] They'd seen him laying around the city. Maybe they had heard about the name of Jesus, but they didn't know exactly what they were getting themselves into and boy, were they ever getting themselves into something for this day. They were about to see a miracle and have their minds blown.

Can you imagine coming upon a situation where you see a large group of people gathered around one individual that is teaching? All of a sudden, a group of four men frantically try to get this man to the foot of Jesus with no success.

They were watching this whole thing play out and had to be one of those grab your popcorn type of moments and let's see what's going to happen next. People watching from a distance asking each other, what do you think they're going to do with that man?

Are they really going to try to get this guy, try to stop this guy from talking? There is no way they're going to get him through all of these people. They must be crazy trying to carry that man up on the roof through all this.

Look at this. They can't even get him through the crowd. They're going to get him up on the roof. Oh my goodness, are you kidding me? Popcorn. Entertainment. And one of them, one of the men carrying this particular paralyzed man has this brilliant idea he's going to take him up and the passerby is just like, let's go.

[22 : 04] I'm so enjoying this. This is like binge watching my favorite show right now. This would have been so strategic for that group of four men. They had to get him up on the roof and then they had to remove a part of the roof and then they had to lower him down.

And this is, we're not talking like the Marines like shimmying down a rope in the middle of a situation. This is a, they had to lower him down very carefully to put him right at the feet of Jesus. You see the people, they had to have their curiosity peaked at this point. What is this guy going, what is Jesus going to do in this situation? And then they witness one of the most amazing miracles that they could have seen in that particular time.

They see this man get lowered down through the roof to be set right at the foot of the Savior. And then many of those people are going to be like, oh my goodness, what's going on? And then they watch Jesus perform the miracle.

These may be like the people that kind of slip into the back of the church on a Sunday morning. Or the people that maybe stay at home and watch the service rather than coming in and being a part of the fellowship of believers at a local church.

[23 : 14] The ones that get to church just a little bit late and they leave just a little bit early so they don't have to face anyone or have those conversations that maybe they don't want to have. Or maybe the people that get here and they slip out just a touch early so in that way they beat the traffic getting out of the parking lot and they check it off of their to-do list for the week.

Or maybe part of that group of people that are just trying to figure out who this Jesus guy really is. What does he have to really offer us? Just kind of checking him out from the sidelines.

You see, we as believers we play a huge role in showing others who Christ is and the hope and the love that he has to offer. We must love this group of people so that they can understand who Jesus is and who he truly is and the hope and the love that we can get from him.

And that brings us to our third group of people. The group of people that does an amazing job of that right there. And that is the friends of the paralyzed man.

You see, these are the type of friends that I desire to have. I look at the story of the healing of the paralyzed man and a story of faith and hope and love and when you take a look at the faith of these men, the faith of these men that they had to have in Jesus caused them to do something that went against the culture, that went against the grain of what society would have said was okay.

[24 : 38] They tore off the roof of someone's house. They lowered this man down into the foot of Jesus just as he's teaching in front of all of these big religious leaders and all of these things that are going on and all of the sudden everything stops and Jesus meets this man right where he is.

This lesson has been interrupted by the lowering of this man to the feet of Jesus and all he does is stop everything and love him.

What a great example of what we're supposed to do when we are supposed to be called to stop everything else that we're doing and just love someone.

Hope is another characteristic that these men had to have had. The hope that they had in the Savior of the world, the hope that they put in Jesus himself, they were willing to do something so drastic to help their friend, they knew that Christ was the only way that he would be healed.

And that they were willing to pull out all of the stops to give him that chance. And the love that they must have had for their friend and the love that they must have had for Jesus himself.

[25 : 49] The love of this group of men to have for their paralyzed friends is everything that we should desire to have in a friendship. This is a friendship that is God-honoring, Christ-centered, and one that will last because Jesus is the one that is in the middle of all of it.

You see, they put their full trust in Jesus knowing knowing that he loves them unconditionally and will go out of his way to make sure that we know that he loves us as well. I want to be this type of friend.

I want to be someone that will go out of my way to do drastic things in the name of Jesus. I want people to see my friendships and my relationships as Christ-honoring. And you see, when we allow Jesus to be at the center of our relationships and we allow Christ to guide us, our busyness will not matter any longer.

We will be a group of believers that will pull out all of the stops to make sure that our friends are able to get to the feet of the Savior. We will take our schedules and our appointments and realize that the salvation of our friends and our families and our coworkers and the strangers that are walking down the street are more important than anything that we have going on in that moment. Last week, Pastor Steve challenged us to go, to go into the world shining the light of Jesus to all who will come in contact with Him. Allowing people to see the Savior of the world through our actions and our words and as we wrap up this morning or this afternoon or whatever time you're watching this at home, I want you to start thinking about a few things.

[27 : 21] I want you to think about who do you truly resonate with from the story of Luke? Do you resonate with the Pharisees the person that is willing to take time out of your busy life to look at a situation only to find the fault in it?

To work hard to make sure that the people are following the rules and the traditions that have been put in place by people of the past? Are you a passerby?

The person that takes time out of their busy lives to see what is going on, to stop and check things out, to see what all the commotion is about. The person that jumps on the bandwagon with no real intention of getting actively involved, or are you like the friends?

Are you the person that will love others so boldly that you look differently from the rest of the world? Do you put the needs of others ahead of that of your own well-being? And then the final question I want you to really think about today that we can take from this particular passage and challenge us?

What are you willing to do or what are you willing to sacrifice to make sure that others get to the feet of the Savior? You see, Jesus is calling us to action and when we say yes to Him, it is not the finish line.

[28 : 38] It is only the beginning of the greatest adventure that you will ever go on and Jesus is the only place where we can truly find the faith, the hope, and the love that we desire.

Pray with me. Father, what a blessing it is just to be able to share in your Holy Word, to be able to dive into your Scriptures and I pray, Father, that this Scripture just came to life for all of the listeners today.

Father, I pray your blessings on them and I ask you, Lord, just allow us to understand who you are a little bit more after diving into your Scriptures today. I thank you for Jesus and I thank you for just the sacrifice that He has made for us and the life that He lived.

In the precious name of your Son, Amen. I pray. I pray.