

Getting People To Jesus

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[0 : 00] If you're like me and you grew up in Sunday school classes in the glory days of flannel graph especially, you will be familiar without a doubt with this story.

I actually looked up this week, believe it or not, when I was thinking about this, I looked up to see if I could find a flannel graph board that actually portrayed this story. And we could have used it as an object lesson today for our class and I couldn't find one that reflected this one especially.

But I remember learning it so often growing up as a kid. I feel like I hear about it less as an adult, but as a kid I was so familiar with this story.

It's a favorite story for many people and for good reason. It contains all of the elements of a great story. All of them are at play in this particular story.

There's a need, a desperate need. There's a problem that has to be met. There is opposition to the one that can actually help the problem. There's evil here.

[1 : 05] There's wickedness here. There is determination. There's perseverance in this story. And then there, of course, is great victory in this story. All the things that make for a great story are included.

And I assume that's probably why it's deployed so often in children's classes. But we must be careful that our love for great stories doesn't inadvertently lead us to miss the message, to miss the point for why God has actually given these stories to us.

We need to remember that this is not a fictional narrative. All we read in the Bible is not fiction. It is not myth. It is historical accounts.

This is a real thing. These were real people. This was a real moment in history. There is plenty of eyewitnesses gathered, as we have just read, to verify its validity.

And so far as we can tell, all throughout history and early church history, none of the people that were gathered there ever popped up and said, you know what, it didn't quite happen the way that you're saying that it has happened. It's amazing how that works, isn't it?

[2 : 18] All of the people that witnessed these things that we study in the Gospels, all of them gave credit in that time to what they saw and what they heard and what they experienced.

It only takes a few hundred years for us to finally decide that we're going to deny the truthfulness of whatever actually took place. This isn't fiction. This is real life.

And its purpose in this particular instance is not simply to communicate the persistence of good friends or the intellectual triumph of Jesus over the Pharisees and the scribes.

That's probably one of my favorite parts of this story. The way that Jesus handled the scribes and the Pharisees is awesome. It's not really about that.

And it's not so much about the excitement that comes once again with seeing the healing power of Jesus. All of those things are important. All of those things are a part of the story. All of those things we need to examine and we need to learn from.

[3 : 17] But they're all there to support the main point, which is to proclaim that Jesus is God and that he alone can forgive sin.

That's the point of this story. What's the point of Jesus' message that he's preaching? Well, it's that point. It's the same point that all the gospel authors have. What's the point of Mark bringing out this question in the hearts of the scribes and the Pharisees?

Who can forgive sins but God alone? Well, his point in bringing out that question is that's the point of the passage. Only Jesus can do that. And what does the miracle do? Proves that Jesus is actually the one that can forgive sin.

Jesus says as much when he gets to the end. He says, here's the point of all of this. He looks at the Pharisees. They didn't say a word. He read their minds. And after reading their minds and

understanding their hearts, he says, tell me what's easier?

To say, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, arise and take up your bed and go thy way? And then he tells the Pharisees, this is happening in order that you may know, certainly, definitively, that I have power to forgive sin.

[4 : 31] And then he turns away from the Pharisees and he looks at the paralytic and he says, arise, take up your bed and go your way. And what happens? The man immediately gets up. Immediately he's healed of his paralysis. Immediately he picks up the pallet or the bed or the mattress or the pillow, whatever it is he's been carried on.

He picks it up and he goes home. And what's that all about? It's not really about the man being healed of his paralysis. It's about seeing through that to see what Jesus said.

This is happening in order that you may know that I indeed have power to forgive sin. It's a fantastic story. Not just for its ability to convey excitement and adventure and victory and triumph, but because as believers we can come to this and we see clearly what this is for.

We see clearly what it's about. This is about a savior. This is about a redeemer. This is about God forgiving sins.

And all that's taking place is just giving proof of the fact that Jesus is that savior. He is that God.

And we can look at that just briefly and just understand the basic structure of a story like this.

[5 : 43] Basic point of why this is given. And that should bring joy and excitement. Yes. You ever have those moments when you're reading your Bible and it's just like something clicks with you.

The spirit opens your mind to something and you piece something together maybe for the first time or you really begin to understand it in a deeper way. And it's one of those like it's real moments. Not that you ever doubted before that it was real necessarily, but every now and then the Lord helps us just to have a moment where we are just filled with joy and excitement over the truth of God's word. This story gives us that if we're looking at it with the right view. If we're seeing it for what it is and for the purpose that it gives us.

And indeed that's the case with all of scripture. We look at it for its purpose. And all of the purpose of the scripture is ultimately to point us to Jesus, which fills us with such joy and excitement.

Well, let's look here at the setting. In the first couple of verses we see what's happening. We're told in verse 1 that Jesus has come back to Capernaum and he was in the house.

[6 : 50] Now Capernaum seems to have been the headquarters for Jesus's ministry during the time that he was in Galilee. But he had left the city and you remember that when we were studying in chapter 1.

In fact, look with me back up at verse 38 of chapter 1. Remember Jesus had this 24-hour period where he was teaching in the synagogue and then they brought all of these people to Peter's house to be healed and then he was out praying in the wilderness.

And then in verse 38, And he said unto them, that is his disciples, Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also. For therefore came I forth. And so we saw in chapter 1, despite the popularity that was growing for Jesus in Capernaum, he had a priority of purpose.

And his priority of purpose was to preach the word. And so he left Capernaum and he has spent some time. We don't know how much time, but some time is what Mark tells us here in verse 1.

And he has now come back to Capernaum. And he is in the house, we're told. And we assume here that the house that it's speaking of is Peter's house once again.

[7 : 59] In fact, I think it's safe for us to assume that whenever Jesus is in a house in Capernaum, unless the scripture specifically notes it as otherwise, I think it's safe for us to assume that it's probably Peter's house.

Because of the success of his business, he certainly had a large enough place. What they believed to be Peter's house, even still today, and what they found in the ruins of Capernaum, indicates that it would have been sufficient to house not only Peter and Andrew and Peter's family and Peter's mother-in-law, but certainly would have had space for Jesus as well.

And so as they come back to Capernaum, they find their place again at Peter's house, where we see other things taking place in the gospel events as well. And as you might expect, it didn't take very long for word to get out that Jesus was back.

Look with me at verse 2. Immediately, Mark says, many were gathered together in so much that there was no more room to receive them, not even near the door.

Now imagine you're Jesus or Peter or Andrew or James or John. At this point in Mark's account, these are the four that we know of that are actually following Jesus closely.

[9 : 15] You've left Capernaum, and you left Capernaum probably a little bit tired. You're running on a little bit of adrenaline because this amazing night where all of these people are being brought, and you immediately adventure out.

You leave Capernaum, and you're traveling. You're going from town to town and from village to village in Galilee, and you're following Jesus. And everywhere you go, there's crowds of people. It's hard to have any kind of privacy.

It's hard to have any kind of rest because all the people that are coming, now they perhaps, maybe even snuck their way into Capernaum. They find their place at Peter's house, and maybe they're just looking for a little bit of rest.

They're looking for a place where they can just relax for just a bit to have any kind of respite from the crowds, any kind of respite from the ministry that they're involved with, and then it just doesn't take very long.

It's not very long, and word gets out. Now remember, when they left Capernaum, they were leaving a crowd of people that were desperately searching for Jesus. So they were awaiting Jesus' potential return to the town, and as soon as word gets out, what are those same people doing?

[10 : 20] He's back. Let's go. They know where he probably is. Peter's house. So they make their way to Peter's house, and immediately the house is full of people. The courtyard is full of people, and Mark tells us, you couldn't even get near the door of the house.

There were so many people that had begun to gather. And what's amazing about this is that we see once again Jesus was always willing to sacrifice his own comfort for others.

Isn't that amazing? Anytime, and we see it over and over in the Gospels, don't we? Anytime he'll send the disciples off, or he'll try to make his way to the mountains to have some time to prayer, or he'll try to get alone, and when the people press on him, what does Jesus do?

He expends himself for them. And that's exactly what he does here. He could have said, no way. Could have kept the door shut. But he didn't do that. He welcomed them.

Why? Because he had a purpose. He had a purpose for why he was there. And that purpose is given to us once again at the end of verse two. Look with me again. Immediately they were gathered together. There was no room to receive him.

[11 : 28] Couldn't even get near the door. And what did Jesus do? He preached the word to them. What? That's not gonna build his popularity.

What did they come there to see? It was probably a mixed crowd, actually. There probably were a few people that were gathered that had become disciples of Jesus at this point. At least they were in the realm of Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, where they were beginning to believe this message, and they wanted to hear more of this message, and they maybe legitimately wanted to hear what Jesus had to say.

Perhaps there were people in the crowd that were like that. We know that there were Pharisees and scribes there, too. Luke tells us that they came from every town and village in Galilee.

They were all looking for Jesus, except they weren't looking to hear Jesus. They were looking to entrap Jesus in some way. The critical eyes were in the crowd. Of course, there was the curious crowd, the curious ones that were just there.

It's not that they believed Christ. It's not, they just wanted to see what this was all about, because that's what happens, right? You could be walking down, didn't even know that Jesus was there, and you see a massive crowd gathered somewhere. What is your instinct?

[12 : 40] I'm gonna go see what this crowd is all gathered for. You ever been to New York City before? Julie and I, we enjoy going, we enjoy visiting, going to watch a baseball game, or spending time with friends.

And if you've ever been, and you've gone to Times Square, you'll see from time to time, you'll just happen upon masses of people, large crowds of people gathered in one place.

And what's your first instinct? It's not just to pass on by. Typically, if you're like me, your first instinct is to join the crowd, because you want to see what's going on. No doubt there's people in the crowd that are that way.

They're walking by. This is right next to the Sea of Galilee. This is right by the synagogue. So we know that people are there. They're passing by, and they see a crowd, and they want to go see

what Jesus is up to.

And of course, there were people that did hear that Jesus was there, and they gathered just to see another sign. It's a mixed crowd. But Jesus doesn't give them what they want. What does he do?

[13:36] He preached the word. He preached the word. He did what he always did. He had a priority of purpose, and his priority of purpose was to preach the gospel.

And we immediately see this pattern continue in Jesus's life and ministry. But what exactly was it that Jesus was preaching?

Mark tells us in chapter 1. You may remember it. In fact, just flip back to it. Verse 14, Mark chapter 1. Now, after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

And here was the summary of his message, saying, The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. It's near. Repent and believe the gospel.

Repent and believe the gospel. Jesus's message was a declaration that the kingdom of God was near. And by this, of course, he was referring to himself.

[14:42] At hand in that passage, or the kingdom of God is near or at hand is a reference to space, not time. He didn't mean that the time frame, chronologically, of what was going to take place with the kingdom was near.

That's not what he meant by that. What he meant was in space, physically. The kingdom is near you. In other words, he was saying, I am the representative and fulfillment of this kingdom that the Jews have been long awaiting.

What was this message doing? It was pointing their eyes to himself, pointing their eyes to Jesus, because when they saw Jesus, they saw the kingdom. When they saw Jesus, they saw the Christ. When they saw Jesus, they saw God in the flesh. And then after he pointed their attention to see himself, the kingdom of God is near you. It is close to you in me.

What did he say? Repent and believe it. Repent and believe the gospel. The good news. That's what Jesus preached everywhere he went.

[15:47] Now, what I love so much about chapter two and verse two is that Mark reminds us that Jesus preached this message of the kingdom from the word.

What's it tell us in verse two? He preached the word unto them. Same thing that Paul tells Timothy to do in his letters. Preach the word, Timothy.

Preach the word. Well, what was Jesus doing? He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. How was he doing it? By pointing people to the scripture. Here is what the scripture says.

Now repent and believe the gospel because the kingdom is here. I am representative of it. Jesus placed such a priority on the Bible. How much more should we be concerned to do so?

It almost sounds silly to say it on a Sunday morning. A church like ours, I believe is faithful people that love the Lord and love the word.

[16:50] But how surprised are we when we find out how many people profess to know Christ, profess to be Christians, yet have such little disregard for the word.

Yet the message that Jesus preached was founded in the scriptures. And if Jesus, the very word of God, thought that to be important, how much more should we?

The gospel message pervaded everything that Jesus said and did. And that should be true of his church as well. The things that we do as a church, it's the gospel message, it's the scriptures that should pervade all of it.

When we gather for worship on a Sunday, what is it that is to pervade our worship? It's the word of God, the message of the gospel in the word. That's why we have so many readings. That's why we open with a call to worship that's rooted in the scripture.

That's why we have times where we just read the Bible together in the service. That's why we close with benedictions that are for the most part based in the scripture. That's why we give so much time every week to an exposition of the scripture because everything we do as the church should be engrossed in, the permeated by, the scripture, the word of God.

[18:13] Now you need to keep that message in mind because as we study this story over the next two Sundays, it's important for us to understand this is what Jesus was doing when these men showed up. So everybody there, even the man that's being lowered down into the house, everybody there had fresh on their mind the gospel of the kingdom, the word of God being preached to them.

It's all in the context of their reactions and we'll see that as we go through. In the course of our study and our exposition to help structure it, we'll look at the narrative through five groups of people or five characters in the story maybe you would like to say it.

And to begin with today, we'll look at the four friends. In fact, if you're keeping notes for this as we go through, that would be your first point. The four friends. The four friends.

Now look with me at verse three. And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was born of four, four friends perhaps.

And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was. And when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

[19 : 28] The first group of people to which our attention is turned consists of four individuals who brought this disabled man to Jesus.

And nothing biographical is given to us about these men. Luke's account tells us that they were men, which is why I refer to them that way. And we assume that they were at least friends of this man.

But what's interesting is that the text doesn't actually tell us. No biographies are given. No biographical sketches. All we know is that these four men brought this paralyzed man to Jesus. We don't know exactly what their relationship to the man was. But it's abundantly clear here that they were determined to get the man to Jesus. Their focus was set on the man being healed of his paralysis.

And they were desperate to get him to Jesus because Jesus was the one whom they believed was actually capable of meeting the man's need. And so that's what begins to unfold.

[20 : 36] We see the determination of these men to get their friend to Jesus. The only one who could help him. Of course we see in these men a passion that should exist in the heart of every person who knows the power of Christ.

A passion to get others to Jesus so that he too may meet their need. Of course the focus of these men was not on the man's spiritual well-being.

That's not why they were bringing him to Jesus. They didn't understand exactly who Jesus was yet. Their understanding wasn't made complete. It wasn't even made complete at this point for the disciples.

There was still much they were learning about Jesus and much that they wouldn't understand until his crucifixion and resurrection were accomplished. They were bringing the man specifically so that Jesus would meet his physical need.

but we have a greater knowledge of how Jesus can meet the spiritual needs of those around us. You know a much greater work that Christ can do in the hearts of others and we should have at least the same amount of passion if not more passion to get people to Jesus for the purpose of forgiveness as these men had in getting this man to Jesus for the purpose of healing.

[22 : 04] Let's just take a moment this morning to consider what we learn about these men here what was going on in their lives and how we can apply that even to our own evangelistic efforts as believers.

The first thing we see is that they were compassionate. These men were compassionate men.

Again verse 3 and they came unto him bringing one sick of the palsy which was born of four.

There's no way that this event would have ever even happened if it weren't for these four men having a compassionate heart. It would have never even taken place.

Compassion was the prerequisite here. Now it's likely that they knew the man personally. They could have been friends of his. They could have been colleagues. Maybe this was a brother or a father or a son to one of them that they probably knew in that way but the text doesn't actually tell us that.

Maybe he was a friend. Maybe he was a beggar. Maybe he's just a man that they passed on the street from day to day who was just hoping that someone would show a little pity toward his plight.

[23 : 18] The point is it doesn't matter how they knew him. It doesn't matter what their relationship to this man was. What matters is the compassion that they felt for the man and how that compassion encouraged them to bring the man to Jesus.

Without compassion their actions would have never taken place. The man would have remained deprived physically and spiritually and we wouldn't have this incredible lesson to learn about Jesus and his identity and his purpose.

What does it all begin with? Four men who looked with compassion on somebody with a great need. Bringing people to Jesus begins with recognizing that others have a need for Christ and having compassion towards that need.

if we don't look compassionately at our friends and our family and our colleagues and our community how will they ever have their need met by Christ?

Christ. Now I believe that God will accomplish his work in one way or another this scripture is clear but it's also clear that we are his instruments of grace that he uses to accomplish his work.

[24 : 47] Remember Romans chapter 10 we all know verse 13 whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Your salvation is based on the grace of God through the justification by faith alone.

But what does verse 14 say? Paul writes how then shall they call on him whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?

And how are they to hear without somebody preaching telling them the gospel? And how are they to preach unless they're sent? As it's written how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

salvation is the work of God's grace. It's not in us to do it but we are his instruments of grace for others. And what that begins with is just compassion.

Looking at the world around us with some compassion toward their condition. Not their condition financially. Not the condition of their employment.

[25 : 49] Not the condition of their family per se. But something deeper than that. Their condition and their sin. And show some compassion towards the gospel message that God has given you, blessed you with, and then entrusted you with.

It all starts with compassion. That's how it began with these men. If we're to be effective in our witness, that's how it'll begin with us as well. So they were compassionate. Secondly, we see that they were relentless.

They were relentless. In fact, the next three of these characteristics all come from verse four in our understanding of what they actually did. Let's read it. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was.

And when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. you know, perhaps that day when Jesus was leaving Capernaum, remember that morning he'd gotten up a great while before day, everyone else was asleep, and he went out into a solitary place, and he prayed, and he was seeking the will of the Father, and that is what is directing him in those moments, right?

The disciples finally find him, but Mark tells us that it wasn't only the disciples that were looking for him. Peter speaks up when he finds Jesus, he says, everybody's looking for you, it's not just us, everyone.

[27 : 09] There's a mad search right now in Capernaum to find Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus says, well, we're going to hit the road now, because I got to go preach other places, that's why I came. Perhaps this man laying on his bed, perhaps these four friends had picked up the man that morning.

They had heard about what had happened with Jesus in the synagogue the morning before. They'd heard about what Jesus had done late into the night as masses of sick people and lepers and demon-possessed people were being brought to Jesus, and he healed every one of them.

Perhaps that morning they find out, and they get up and they go find their buddy, and they pick up each corner of his bed, and they're trying to find Jesus desperately, but they can't find him because he's left out. Jesus left, and this man was still in his condition.

There's probably a lot of people that that happened to. Now that they hear what's going on, nothing's going to stop them from getting the man to Jesus, right? And so they hear Jesus is back, and they go and they get their buddy, and they pick up his bed, and they head over to Peter's house, that's where they assume that Jesus is, or at least that's what they've heard he is, and as soon as they get there, they're immediately met with a massive obstacle.

The obstacle is a crowd. They can't get to Jesus. The house is full. Not only is the house full, they can't even get to the door. There's just people everywhere, and no one else in the crowd was compassionate enough to see that there's a healer in the house, and there's a man that's sick of the palsy with the paralysis out here.

[28 : 33] We gotta get this man to Jesus. No, nobody cared to do that. They wanted their own place in line. No cutting today. We gotta make sure we get to him first.

There's no compassion in them, but there's some compassion in these men, and this compassion led to a relentless determination to get this man to Jesus. Most of us, at least if you're like me, I shouldn't say most of us, because maybe you're not quite like this, but this is the point where I might have accepted the prospect of getting the man to Jesus was impossible.

Sorry, man, we did all we could do. We tried to get you here as soon as we can. There's just people everywhere. We can't get there. We can't even get close enough to the house to signal someone that could help us, and we just give up.

We get discouraged. Not these men. They were relentlessly determined to get this man to Jesus, and what was that? It was the overflow of their compassionate heart.

You see how it starts to build? The more compassion they felt for that man, the more determination they had to get that man to Jesus. the more compassion we feel for our colleagues, the more compassion we feel for our community, the more compassion we feel for our friends, the more compassion we feel for our family, the more determined we will be to get the gospel to them.

[30 : 06] As God helps us to develop a genuine compassion, we will indeed develop this relentless determination. But Christians should live with an attitude of determination that is rooted in trusting the sovereign work of God.

The problem sometimes with our evangelism is we think that it all relies on us. That if I just learn to say the right things, or if I learn to bring the conversation to this way, and that's helpful, but that's not the end, it's just a means.

And when we witness and we witness and we witness and we share and we share and we share and we pray and we pray and we pray and nothing seems to happen and we leave discouraged because of, am I not doing this right?

But we need to remember, only God can save. The task has not been given to us to save a person. We can't do it no matter how hard we try. The task that's given to us is just to share the gospel. Alistair Begg says all the time, I don't know if it's original to him, it may be to someone else.

[31 : 27] We are responsible for faithfulness. God is responsible for fruitfulness. Paul said this, there was infighting in the church of Corinth about divisions.

Some proclaim that they were on Paul's team. Others claim that they were on Apollos' team. The super spiritual said, well, we're on Jesus' team. And what did Paul write?

I planted, Apollos watered, but it's God that gives the growth. And what did he go on to say? So he that plants is nothing. He that waters is nothing.

But only God who gives the growth, the increase. So don't get discouraged in your witness if there's not a lot happening.

We are relentlessly determined to share our compassionate hearts as we preach the gospel, but we do so fully trusting that God will do his work the way that he is determined to do his work.

[32 : 29] And so trust him. Be faithful to the task and trust the Lord. Thirdly, they were creative. They were creative.

They're compassionate. They're relentless. Now we see that they're creative. And this is our favorite part, isn't it? To see what these men did. And it all is continuing to build.

It starts with this compassion and they've developed the compassion for the man that led to a relentless determination to get the man to Jesus. And born out of that relentless determination is this creativity to find any way, just some way, to get the man to Jesus.

When faced with what seemed like an impossible situation, they started to think outside of the box, which sometimes is important for us to do. Now, houses in Israel in this day, from what I understand and from what I've read, were single-story houses with flat roofs.

And when they would construct these roofs, they started with large wooden beams that they would run in one particular direction. And then laying across those beams was a mixture of sticks and thatch and other things that they would mix together and they would fill in the gaps in the roof itself.

[33 : 44] And they would continue to do that until it was about two feet thick. Once it was about two feet thick, it would harden. All of the mixture that they put together would then harden.

And then once it was hard enough and it was stable enough, they would lay tiles on the top of this thatch and these sticks and this wood that they had all mixed together on the house. And that made it safe for someone to go up on the roof and they could walk on the roof.

They could have easy access through probably an outdoor stairwell that was either connected to their own home or maybe a home that was connected to their home. And they could walk across the roofs quite literally.

So the men come to Jesus and they're trying to get to him and they can't get there. And then they look and they notice a stairwell and they immediately head up the stairwell.

They go to the roof. They find and pinpoint the location of Jesus in the building. And then they quite literally dug a hole. They dug a hole in the roof.

[34 : 46] This isn't shingles. This isn't like something they're peeling away. This isn't just like a thick layer of thatch. This is thick. This was time consuming. This was distracting.

But they were creative. They were relentless. They just wanted to get the man to Jesus. It's just amazing what they did. We look back on these actions. We read this story and this is what we love, right?

When we're kids in the Sunday school class and we see the flannel graph and this is what's so cool. Oh man, they tore the roof apart because we all want to as kids, we want to tear roofs apart. We want to tear everything apart. And they start to tear it and we love it.

Well, even as adults, we look back at what they did and even as I'm doing right now in this sermon, we are esteeming these men for what they did. What determination, what creativity.

They did what no one else would do in order to get this man to Jesus. But how often are we actually guilty of condemning similar actions in others?

[35 : 43] Think about the distraction this must have been to the service. We get frustrated if a baby cries or a kid has to go to the bathroom.

Imagine you're sitting there listening to Jesus on this day. And it's not just that someone's fiddling around on the roof. It's that for quite a bit of time, somebody's up there with a shovel or whatever they had and they're digging a hole in the roof.

Talk about distraction. You're crunched in. There's no social distancing happening in this house. They've got as many people in there as they can get.

You're shoulder to shoulder touching people you don't want to touch anyways. And now the debris is starting to fall. It's getting on you and it's aggravating and you can't hear and there's distractions and you're frustrated because this is inconvenient.

And this is bothering me. And how many of the people in that house looked at those men and thought, wow, what creative genius is that? Oh, they probably were irritated.

[36 : 52] Just like we would be irritated if right now somebody just starts coming through the roof. Who won the world? What about Peter? We believe this is probably his house.

He and his brother and James and John are sitting there. Somebody had to help this man get through the hole, right? His four friends are on the top. I doubt they came armed with rope. They just got to dig it up the best they can and get the man down.

Somebody in the house had to receive him on the other end, right? Jesus didn't just miraculously cause the man to levitate and come down like an elevator in the room. That's not what happens. Perhaps Jesus even looks at Peter and says, why don't you help these guys out? Imagine if Peter was just ticked off that somebody's tearing his house apart. And instead of trying to help the man get down, he's just fussing about all of this mess and who's going to pay for this?

This is just a mess. There are a lot of reasons for people to be irritated by these men. But Jesus never rebuked them. He never said, I wish y'all would just sit down and be quiet for a minute.

[38 : 05] I'm not done. He seems to be thrilled with what they did actually. Because it's when he looked on them and saw their faith that he responds to the man that they had brought.

The question for us has to do with which side of this equation do we find ourselves on most often? Are we creatively searching for ways to get people to Jesus and hear the gospel?

Or are we more prone to condemn the efforts of others and point out all the ways that they're doing it wrong? I'd like to think that I would have been with these four men on this.

But the reality is that most often it's a spirit of criticism that pervades my heart. But I can't help but see the reaction of Jesus here.

It's convicting isn't it? I understand my own nature is to be irritated when it doesn't go the way that I want it to go.

[39 : 13] And yet Jesus isn't irritated at all. I had a friend, he pastors in Connecticut just a couple of weeks ago. He just made a great statement that helped me at a good time. And he said, he said

this, he said, if God is pleased, then we don't need to worry about who isn't.

If God is pleased, we don't need to worry about who isn't. There's a house and courtyard full of people irritated with these men.

They didn't care. They just try and get the man to Jesus. Now that's not to say that Jesus is pleased with every method that's ever employed by churches. There certainly are ways that churches and individuals do this and actually end up sinning against the Lord in the process.

It's not to say that God is pleased with every method. But our offense most often has to do with our own displeasure rather than the Lord's.

If we're going to do anything for the Lord as a church, we're going to have to stop thinking, how's this going to be perceived by everyone else? How's this going to be perceived by our community? [40 : 24] How is this going to be perceived by the other churches? How is this going to be perceived by others? And we're going to have to start thinking more about what's actually going to please the Lord.

What's going to please what he's told us to do in the word. And so long as our creative, relentless determination and compassion isn't going against the clear teaching of the scripture, why not do everything we can to get the gospel where it needs to go and to get people where they need to be to hear it.

They're compassionate. They're relentless. They're creative. Finally, they're sacrificial. Sacrificial men. Everything they did was sacrificial in nature.

They got nothing from this. And the best we can tell, they were seeking nothing for themselves.

They sacrificed their own needs in order to put first the needs of their friend.

I'm sure they had needs that could be met. Maybe they had already seen Jesus at some point.

Maybe that's why they wanted to bring this man to them. Maybe their need had already been met.

But in either case, they prioritize their friend.

[41 : 44] They sacrificed their time to actually take the man to Jesus and ensure he was able to meet him. That took time. How many of us, we struggle with this in our lives because it's just hard to find the time.

It's hard to make the time. It's hard to sacrifice the time. Their choice to tear open the roof, that was a calculated sacrifice.

I don't think they went there that day planning to do that. But surely somebody in these five men stopped before they did it and said, okay, wait a minute.

Who's going to pay for this? Somebody's got to pay for it. Peter's not just going to say, yeah, tear the whole place down. I'll take care of it. Somebody's going to have to. They sacrificed for this.

They sacrificed their pride as they risked the danger of being ostracized by the people who disagreed with them. They're a minute of sacrifice. So are those who give themselves to bring people to Jesus for spiritual healing.

[42 : 51] They're sacrificial in nature. They sacrifice their time to teach and share the gospel. They sacrifice their finances to support the church and its gospel efforts.

They sacrifice their reputation when they risk being mocked and persecuted for their beliefs. They sacrifice their pride when they're opposed by those who only want to criticize. But why do they sacrifice so much?

Because they want others to experience the grace that they've experienced. They want others to know the forgiveness that they know. And there's no sacrifice that would keep them from doing that. We hope. But yet often we're not willing. The narrative is not about these four men.

They're playing supporting roles here in this story. The point is that these 12 verses emphasize that Jesus is God and only he can forgive sin.

[43 : 56] But we can't ignore or diminish the role that these men played in this process. They didn't understand fully who Jesus was or even what Jesus was going to do.

In fact, Jesus' first response would have been a surprise to all of them. But they were convinced that he was the only way that their friend could be helped. The question for us is do we believe that Jesus is the only way that the people in our lives can actually be helped?

And if so, are we committed to bringing people to Jesus compassionately, relentlessly, creatively, sacrificially?

We dedicate our lives to all kinds of things. All kinds of things. Noble things. I thought about this morning and I actually wrote it in my notes. The statement by C.T. Studd who was a missionary to

China and then to Africa and I think the Congo maybe.

There were various places that he served. But what is it that he said? Only one life will soon be passed. This was a poem that he wrote. Only what's done for Christ will last. I'm not saying that you give up everything in your life for this.

[45 : 10] But this should be a priority for all of us. If Jesus is who we believe he is, we have no other choice but to give our lives telling others about him.