The Importance of Rope Holders

Text: Mark 2:1-5. 1. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4. 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. 5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

This story is dear to be for many reasons. When I was a little boy, our Sunday School class made 3-D pictures from shoe boxes. Do you remember those. It was where we took off the lid, glued paper designs of people and cut out a peep hole in one end to view the Lord’s supper, the crucifixion, or some other Bible story. One of the most memorable stories was this one. I had to cut out the top and drew down a stretcher closing the door and viewing Jesus looking at this man with palsy.

It was something different. It was unusual. It required for people to think “outside of the box” in order to make this happen. And I see or felt the compassion that Jesus must have had towards this person and others for their faithfulness.

Let’s look at this story.

There are 4 main groups of people mentioned here.

**One was Jesus**. Everywhere Jesus went, people followed and wanted to be near him. Imagine that! Why would someone want to be near Jesus? Because He has something they do not have or need. So often, we only come to Jesus when we have exhausted all our resources. We should come to Him first. There are people today who will flock to see Jesus if only Jesus would show up. Or…Does he show up? Why isn’t there a crowd? It’s something for us to think about.

If we are here, then Jesus should also be here. There should be a wonderful light of Jesus shining in all of us no matter where we are, whether it is here, Walmart, work, play, etc. There should be enough light for everyone to feel his presence and come running to see what is happening, who is this man called Jesus, what is it about you that is different, and how can I come to know this Jesus.

Even when Jesus tried to enter a city privately, his presence was soon known and the word spread that Jesus is here! Jesus is here! Jesus is here! What are people in our community saying about Jesus or are they seeing any kind of Jesus among their midst?

Our church should be a light or magnet for everyone to see. If not, why should they come here? If we are not on fire for the Lord, why should others want to be here with us? What do they see in you and me that they would want?

**Secondly**, there were people who were sick. There were people who pressed in just to be near Him. There were no doubt people who could not see, hear, or walk. Some had diseases, spirits, or some other type of need that only Jesus could provide. They came with expectation knowing that their need will be met if I can only touch the hem of his garment, if I can get his attention or cry out “have mercy on me”. They came…They came…They came! Wow!

Let me say, “There are people in our community that are sick!” What hope do they have? Some have been bound by drugs, alcohol, or some type of addiction. They are depressed, hopeless for anyway out of their situation, abused, neglected, void of all natural love, and not knowing that there is a better way. I have noticed when people are sick, they no longer become offensive about God or praying. They are willing to accept any kind of help. We must position ourselves to help them. Somehow the churches have gotten to the idea that others should come to them but in truth, we should be going out to where they are.

Jesus still cares for all of them, no matter what they have done, who they are, or whether they have money or position. Let me ask you again, Why aren’t they flocking into our church or pressing in to see Jesus? Or do they know that he is even here? Wow! Jesus comes for the whosoevers of this world! But it takes people like you and I to allow them to see Jesus or get them to know He is here. Just as this story unfolds, our part is to share that Jesus is in town!!! We need to be visible and more vocal in our community.

(Example of seeing a sign of the best hamburger in town.) I decided to try this out and ordered a hamburger. Not to be critical but I waited a long time to be waited on, not to be critical but it was very cold in the building (almost froze to death), not to be critical but my order was wrong, and not to be critical the burgers were not the best in town. As a church, what message are we sending? Do we need to revisit our message of how can we better communicate our message out to a sick and dying world? That is our challenge today.

**Thirdly**, there were people who were curious. (nosey) Have you ever noticed when a church is growing and how people will talk and come just to see what is happening? People will travel everywhere just to experience or witness what is happening.

People are really curious. When a new business is coming into town or near you, people usually cannot settle until they find out what is happening, who is moving in? We see a business that has been moved or one is torn down, we all come together and ask, “What is happening?” People can be lat nosey. What are people saying about our church? Are they curious of all the stirring or talking about a powerful move of God? Are they wondering what is happening down here? Are they aware that Jesus is in town?

This crowd was so large, all the doors and windows were so blocked that no one else could have access to the One (Jesus) who people really needed to see or to gain His attention. Curious people, nosey people were blocking others from receiving a blessing. What a shame! I am hoping as we grow, that we don’t have too many of those kinds of people flocking in where others who need Jesus would be left out! We need to be careful of that. We also need to be careful of the people who are drawn from other places that add no value to our vision and church. To be honest, these kinds of people have been hindrances everywhere they go, never satisfied. We need to guard against from compromise or losing our vision due to their negative influence!

**Fourthly**, there are people who think outside of the box. I want you to listen to me. They do not let anything to come in between the goal or vision set out. They say, “How can we make this happen? They brainstorm on ideas, working together (unity), and implement their plan regardless. Too often people allow the “little things” to hinder their progress and stay on a path that God desires.

**First**, they decided if they cannot go through, they were going down. They uncovered the roof where Jesus was. See [Mt 9:2]. In this day and time, the houses were flat. In cities they joined each other, and the roofs constituted an agreeable place for walking. It is not improbable that they ascended a neighboring house, and came over the hall, where Jesus was. They removed the curtain or awning, drawn over the area, where Jesus was, so that they might let the man down before him.

**Secondly**, they did not care of what others thought. They did not form a committee or ask for public opinion, they had a direction and plan to accomplish their goal. We too as a church should not be worried about public opinion about us trying to draw all men unto Jesus. We are not serving them, we are serving Him. He desires for the church to move forward and bring all manner of men before Him.

**Thirdly**, they also had to work in unity. Have you ever tried to let someone down with 4 ropes? It takes unity! Everyone must be on the same page, looking and observing, all are there for a particular purpose, not self serving or being the fastest. If one person is too fast, it knocks out the person or thing they are lowering. As a church, we must work and move in unity for one purpose and one purpose only—to see the lost won to Jesus Christ!

Things to consider about these rope holders:

First of all, I hope we have many rope holders in our church. But let me also state, that not everyone in a church is a rope holder. Who would you trust to lower you down? We can all relate to that question but Bro. Jim, we are talking about church people. Not everybody has the same commitment to our vision nor do they have a burning desire to bring in others. That is just a fact. We don’t have to worry about it, we just have to move forward and do what God directs us to do (as a team).

Let’s examine the elements of a good rope holder:

 They must have an interest in the person they are helping. As a former scout leader, I soon found out that not every man can make a good leader for boys. They must like boys. Not everyone who attends this church will have the compassion and interest in the lost. That is the reason why churches are not growing across America, pure and simple. Very simply put, people are more interested in themselves and what they can gain than caring for others.

Let me ask you a question, “What is the purpose of the church?” A large group of pastors and church members were asked, “What is the main purpose of the church?” 90% of the pastors stated it was to reach the lost, 10% stated it was to meet the needs of the people. When church members were asked the same question, 90% of them said something a little different. They stated that the purpose of the church was to meet their own needs, only 10% stated that it was to reach the lost. No wonder churches are not growing! They are not working together, being double minded, and seeking their own pleasures.

If we expect our church to grow, we must stop thinking about ourselves and have a burning desire for others. So many times, we get so caught up in our own departments, activities, and needs that we forget the main purpose as to the reason why we are here. It is not just to gather, it is more than just worship, which is very important, but we should also be a lighthouse for all those who are lost and perishing. How many people do we pass when coming to the church? Do we become so calloused and such a hurry to come to church to do things that we seem to “ignore” everyone else’s need for Jesus?

Their plan may be different than traditional ways. Who would ever think about tearing off the roof to lower someone down to Jesus? “You can’t do that!” “We are not use to doing things that way or worshiping that way!” “Bro. so and so never did it this way!” “This is the way we have always done it!” Have you ever heard this? Their faith or a lack of it pulls down the energy (causes hindrances). Rope holders never listen to the nay-sayers. They have a purpose and mission to accomplish.

If we are not careful, we can get so stuck in tradition that we forget the main purpose is to reach Jesus. Reaching the lost 40 years ago with tracts or mass media may not work into today’s generation. People today have not been use to having prayer in schools, having the reverence for the church and things of God, having a God-fearing nation that did not believe in compromise and had godly values. To reach the people today may look different than it use to because the generation today is different.

I don’t know about you but this is good stuff!

Again, reaching the lost today may look different than what we use to do but our world is so much different. Let me emphasize, while we can approach things differently, our message must be the same…Jesus love you and so do we. They must know that Jesus is alive and cares for them. We must develop and stand unified to a vision and plan to reach the lost or otherwise, my friend, we will dwindle down to nothing, denying God’s will for this church and community and I know we don’t to hear it…but being held accountable to God for doing nothing. Will God say, “Why did you care so much for yourself but ignored those who needed me?” Are you hearing me today?

The rope holders were not being selfish or thinking about their own needs but had an overwhelming desire to help this person and make everything possible for them to meet Jesus We should also have that overwhelming desire to help others come to know Jesus and do whatever it takes to make that happen. Pushing beyond those who are curious or sightseers, those who are selfish for their own needs, and those who are spectators that go from church to church. We must get people in front of Jesus.

In conclusion:

We must work together in unity for one purpose. They showed up!!! So many people have good intentions and can agree with our church moving forward, but the truth of the matter, some will not show up. (I love my sleep time). Again, we can’t focus on these people but move ahead. In order to make a difference, the rope holders had to do something more than agree on how to do something, they had to actually implement it into action. They had to tear off the roof, position this person over the opening, and lowered him down to Jesus.

**Secondly**, it means that these people had to go get this person and bring him to meet Jesus. All the plans in the world will not work unless we go out where the people are. It might mean rolling up our sleeves to go outside of our church, canvassing our community, having special outreach programs for people in our community, but always staying true our plan with as much effort as we can where the people are.

**Thirdly,** the unity that these four rope holders have shown is that they all had a purpose to work together to ensure that this person catches the attention of the one (Jesus) who will bring the healing and restoration to the lost and hurting.

I don’t know about you but I want our church to do everything possible to lead others to Christ, doing everything possible to make sure they hear His message, and to work together to see this community won for Jesus Christ.

Are you a rope holder today? Are you willing to do something different to gain different results? Are you willing to give up your seat for someone else in the community that may not act, dress, or look like we are in here? What are willing to sacrifice and do in order to accomplish what God truly desires for this church and every church across America? Again, the reason why churches are not growing in America is that the church is more focused on our selves instead of others. Oh that we can have many rope holders amongst us.

I want to encourage all of us to re-think about our role and position in the church. I know we all love the fellowship with one another but there should be more. We have people here who have the experience and knowledge to lead others to Christ. We need to ask God for the energy and wisdom to make this happen!

Will God someday ask us, “You seemed to care more for our own self than others?” Or will He say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant?” Jesus saw their faithfulness and rewards their labor. I hope that God will be pleased with our efforts. Come let us pray.