Our Greatest Need

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When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic- 11 "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12)

1. What Do We Need the Most?

What is our greatest need? Do we wish to have more money, success, possessions, good health to live a long life, and have a loving family? What is our wish list for our church? Do we wish that our church has more money, more children, youth, young adults, choir members, outreach programs, Bible study, or better preacher? These things are not bad in themselves but often we can distract from what truly is our greatest need.

If we ask Jesus what we and our church need the greatest, what would Jesus say? Would Jesus say the same as we want to have? Probably not. What we want to have more or better than we have now may not what we really need. Jesus would say that there is something more important than we wish to have. Today's scripture would help us what it is.

2. Friends of the Paralyzed Man

In Mark 2:1-12, we notice a paralyzed man had been brought to Jesus by his four friends. Jesus returns to Capernaum and is probably at Peter's house. Many people come to the house to see Jesus. Jesus is teaching when four men carry a paralyzed man on a mat.

The crowd that has gathered make it impossible to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus. Houses during this time had flat roofs mixed with mud and straw. So the friends of the paralyzed man carry the man to the roof, make a hole, and lower their friend through the roof.

Imagine that you were a person in the crowd. Would you have been moved by this compassion? Some folks might have been upset that this paralyzed man was disturbing Jesus' teaching. Why would his friends take such radical action? This is because they believed that Jesus was the only hope for their paralyzed friend to be healed. Getting their friend healed was their top priority.

A pastor in Korea planted a church that gathered in a public school for worship services. As the church grew, they needed a building. In the middle of the construction, the pastor heard that there was a flood in North Korea. The church stopped the construction and sent 10% of what they had to the relief effort. For the pastor and his church, their top priority was to share with others who were in crisis. Helping others was more important than the construction of the church building.

3. The Paralyzed Man Comes to Jesus

The author of Mark's gospel says when the paralyzed man was lowered, Jesus does not rebuke the interruption of His teaching. Rather, after Jesus sees their friend's faith, he says to the paralyzed man, "***Son, your sins are forgiven***." We notice that Jesus doesn't talk about healing in the passage. Instead he says that the man's sins are forgiven.

Why do you think Jesus talked about forgiveness before healing? In the Old Testament, disease and death were viewed as the consequences of man's sinful condition. The Jews believed sin and suffering are connected. That's why Job's friends challenge Job, "**was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?**" (Job 4:7) To the Jews, a sick man was the one with whom God was mad. Jesus wants the paralytic to know that God still loves him and restores his relationship with God.

Mark says that the teachers of the law there were offended by Jesus' forgiveness of sins. They believed that only God could forgive sins. The scribes regarded such talk by Jesus as blasphemy.

According to Leviticus 24:16, this is a punishable offense by death from stoning. "***One who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death***." Immediately, Jesus perceives the hostile thoughts and he confronts the crowd with a question. "***Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'****?" (Mark 2:11)*

The teachers and leaders in the crowd would have thought saying someone's sins are forgiven was easier than telling someone to get up and walk, especially for a paralyzed man, who was unable to walk. We see here that Mark wants the readers to fully understand that Jesus is not only given power but has the authority to forgive sins.

After Jesus tells the crowd that he has been given the authority to forgive sins, he commands the paralytic to get up and go home. The man is enabled in front of Jesus' critics and is healed. The people are amazed and praise God.

4. Conclusion

What is the greatest need in our lives? Today's story tells us that what we need most is faith in Jesus. The friends of the paralyzed man show the impact of our compassion for others and how we can bring others to Jesus. They had faith in Jesus and knew their friend would be healed.

5. Application

There are so many people who suffer from depression, addiction, or abusive relationship. There are many older adults in our community who need all kinds of support. There are many single parents' children who need love from other people. Many congregations have church-school partnerships and meet needs of school children.

When we think of outreach programs, we have many excuses such as no money, no volunteers, and no place. However, can we be like four friends who were so creative to bring his paralyzed friend to Jesus? If we truly believe that Jesus is the only hope for many people, we need to find out the ways to bring them to Jesus.

Jesus and his disciples did not wait for people to come to the temple or synagogues. But rather they went to meet with people on the street and met their needs. One of outreach programs that I have been trying to bring to our church is Watoto African Children's Choir Concert. I am so thankful to Wanda Crowell for working with me. I will show a video crip and hope you to invite the people in the community on October 20, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Mark 2:1-12 reminds us that if someone comes to Jesus, Jesus not only forgives his or her sins but also heals them from sickness and suffering. If a person can't come to Christ by himself or herself, we need someone who can bring them to Jesus. Are you willing to be one of the friends who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus? May God use you and me to bring someone to Christ so that they experience salvation, healing and life changing power. Amen.