

‘We Are the Church’: Service  
The Mighty Four

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*This parable is informative of how we are to be church for one another and for the sake of the world. \*The church carries others when they cannot carry themselves. This is an act of service. \*The church is to help people get to Jesus. Experience Jesus. Come face to face with Jesus. How do we do that? We let them see Christ through us, and we do acts of service because we love God.*

**Mark Ch 2** <sup>1</sup>When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

**James Ch 2** <sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? <sup>15</sup>If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, <sup>16</sup>and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? <sup>17</sup>So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

<sup>18</sup>But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. <sup>19</sup>You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe — and shudder. <sup>20</sup>Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? <sup>21</sup>Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. <sup>23</sup>Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? <sup>26</sup>For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

Grace and peace to you, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.  
Four friends. Two on each side of the mat, the sweat beading on their foreheads. They are so desperate to get their friend to Jesus. Can you hear them?

“We can do this guys – only another half mile.”

They are encouraging their friend on the mat as well. “Hang in the buddy. We’re going to make it now.

He's paralyzed. He cannot move. We don't know the specifics, but in some form or fashion, he cannot assist himself. He is used to having others bring him food, move him from place to place, or just lay on his pallet all day. He's paralyzed.

They arrive at Jesus' house. There are people in the living room, in the kitchen area, out on the front porch, even leaning into the open windows. People are everywhere! There is no chance these four strong friends are going to push through the crowd. No chance.

Yet they are so desperate to help! One of them has an idea. "Up we go!" The four scramble up onto the roof and begin digging. Excavating really. Typical roofs were made of branches and clay type material. In a few moments, dried branches and grasses begins dropping onto the people on the front porch. Then dried mud chunks begin to fall on the heads of folks inside.

Folks look up shielding their eyes. "What's happening? Are you serious?" they ask one another.

Then the four are pulling him up the roof by his mat. Edging him over to the newly made opening...slowly, carefully, letting him descend.

"Easy now, careful guys! Careful."

Even if Jesus thought about the cost of a new roof, He didn't mention it. He looks at the four friends, sweaty, tired, a look of hope in their eyes that is as clear as the Galilean water. Jesus looks at them and sees more than they know.

Then He looks at the man with paralysis. "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Son...your sins are forgiven.

This, my friends, is what being the church is all about. We don't know anything about those four friends. Really – we don't know anything at all.

Except...they showed up. They took time. They cared. They did something to help another hurting human being when they knew Jesus was near. They took their paralyzed friend to God.

This is God's Work, our Hands weekend and this is what you and I are called to do! Usher people to God! Carry them, hold on to them, encourage them especially in times when they cannot carry themselves!

Notice I didn't say, get them to church. If a person has never been to a brick building with crosses hanging all over the place to listen to some story they've never heard, with people they don't know, they likely won't come. Don't bring them here first. Please keep inviting them. But our job is to bring them into God's presence. Be the four friends. Serve with servant's hearts. Take the time and give with heartfelt humility.

A young boy's mother got sick and then died after several years of suffering. He and his father were left grieving for all they had lost. Some friends of the mother belonged to a Lutheran church near the home. They started showing up with food when her health began to decline. But those ladies didn't stop coming after she passed. The food, the flowers, the cards...the women kept an eye on the young boy and his widowed father.

The young boy said this. "I don't know anything about God or church. Who knows what Lutheran even means?! But I know those women love me."

'I know those women love me.' That's ushering someone into God's presence. That's four friends. That's the Holy Spirit at work!

Here's the Good News! You and I don't save anyone. We don't transform. God does that. Our calling is to help people. Serve people. Usher them in – through the roof, hot casseroles, or rides to the doctor – usher them into God's presence.

God will do all the important stuff. God will redeem, renew, transform, forgive....all that divinely mysterious inner spiritual work. It's our calling to be there. Be present. Serve.

Think of a time when friends carried you. Maybe you were going through a rough patch. They called or helped or showed up. Now think of a time when you carried a friend, or your spouse, or your children. You didn't mind, because all of us would do anything we had to for those we love. We'd walk a mile, we'd cross a raging river, we might even haul someone up a roof.

In our first lesson, James says faith without works is dead. As Lutheran Christians we put a stake in the ground on this topic. We affirm that God loves us and furthermore saves us without our good works, the kind acts we perform for others.

How do you feel when you help another person? Most of us would answer that we get more out of serving than we give. Jesus says, "...give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38)

Next time when you help someone out, tell them you're doing it because you love God. Because you follow Jesus. Because you are a Christian. How will they know unless we say it? Planting those seeds also ushers people closer to God. Remember, God will water the seeds. God will renew, redeem, pull and push until God has them where God wants them. That's God's part! Our part is to carry the man on the mat, or the pregnant woman's basket. Listen to the addict's story. Take dinner to the grieving son and father.

This story has much to say about what the church is called to. God calls us to serve! Amen