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Bringing People to Jesus
Luke 5:17-26
May 29, 2016, Jeff Germo

We are going to take a look at another encounter with Jesus. Last week we looked at the situation where Jesus led his apprentices into a storm (Mark 4:35-41; Matt. 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25). We saw a number of things from that encounter.

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- 1. The number one goal of the Christ-follower is to grow in our trust of him.**

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 - 2. Jesus leads us out of our comfort zones, and into the storm, so we can exercise our faith muscles and learn to trust him more.**

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 - 3. Jesus is big enough to handle your storm.**

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 - 4. No matter what you are going through right now, Jesus wins.**

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 - 5. Do the next right thing and leave the rest to God.**

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Today we are going to look at a very familiar passage where some people bring their paralytic friend to Jesus for healing. And, again, this passage is in all three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each of the evangelists give some different information that helps fill in the gaps, so it's important when studying these passages to take into account what each of them includes in the story to flesh it out a little better.

It's also important to look at the context of what happened preceding this event in each of the Gospel accounts so we get a better picture of what was happening. We are going to mostly look at Luke this morning because he has the most complete story of the three Gospels.

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Preceding the account in Mark 2, Jesus had ***“traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons”*** (Mark 1:39). In one of the towns a man with leprosy came up to him begging him to heal him of the dreaded disease. The Bible says that, Jesus was moved with compassion for the man and reached out and touched him and he was completely healed. He told the man to not tell anyone, but to take a thank offering and present it to the priests as a testimony of his healing.

Then the Bible says,

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Mark 1:45 (NLT)

⁴⁵ But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

Both Mark and Luke have this same account as happening just before the passage we are going to look at this morning. So, Jesus is getting very famous. He has a hard time finding any solitude. People are clamouring around him trying to get healing from all kinds of things.

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Matthew's Gospel includes another story preceding the text we are going to look at. It's the account of two men who were severely demon possessed. Jesus cast the demons out of the men and into a herd of pigs which, consequently, ran over a cliff to their deaths. After that the whole town came out to Jesus and begged him to leave their town. None of the townspeople celebrated the fact that these men who had been bound by Satan for years had finally been freed through their encounter with Jesus. They were more concerned about their pigs than they were about these two men.

So, Jesus climbs back in the boat with his apprentices and heads off across the lake again to his ministry centre in Capernaum. Jesus' fame is spreading.

So, that is the background. Let's walk through our text.

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Luke 5:17–26 (NLT)

17 One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.)

Let's stop here for a minute and fill in the context a bit more. We find out from the parallel passages that Jesus was likely at Peter's home, or more precisely, his mother-in-law's home in Capernaum. Whenever I go to Israel we visit Capernaum and we can see the remains of what is believed to be Peter's house. It was not a huge place, but Mark's Gospel says it was packed to capacity.

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Mark 2:1–2 (NLT)

1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. 2 Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door.

And among the crowd of curious and needy people were a whole lot of Pharisees and teachers of religious law. Luke says they were coming from all over Galilee and Judea. Why were they there?

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These highly religious people, who cared only about their religious system and tradition, followed Jesus everywhere he went. We see them over and over again in the different stories in the Gospels. Rarely do we see them in a good light. They were there to catch Jesus in his words. They were there to see if they could somehow cause him to fail. They were there to try to stir up the crowds to find some wrong in Jesus so they would turn against him. Luke says they came from every village in all of Galilee and Judea. That was likely hyperbole, but the point he was making was that they came in droves to try to trap Jesus in his words.

They didn't care at all about people. Just like the farmers who cared more about their pigs than they did about the eternal destiny of the men who were freed by their encounter with Jesus, these religious leaders cared only about their tradition and maintaining their religious status quo.

Do you ever wonder why Jesus so often healed people on the Sabbath? He could have easily waited until the Sabbath was over. He didn't. He also could have done it in secret. He purposefully healed people on the Sabbath, in full view of the religious leaders, in order to break down the overly religious paradigms of these people who cared more about their traditions than they cared about God or people. And Jesus didn't let them get away with anything - ever.

Let's carry on. So, Jesus is teaching to a full capacity crowd and among his listeners were a whole bunch of religious people who had come to try to trap Jesus in his words. They wanted him to fail.

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Luke 5:17–26 (NLT)

And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, ¹⁹ but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

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So, picture this in your mind. Now, you can't imagine a house like ours with shingled A-framed roofs. On the screen you can see a cutaway drawing of a typical first century Israelite home. They were flat roofed with wooden slats that were covered with straw tile panels that could be removed, or the straw roof could be easily dug through.

So, picture the scene now. The house is packed with people. It is standing room only inside and out. Everyone is there to get something from Jesus. Many of them want him to heal them. And there are also the religious elite among them. Jesus is teaching in the middle of all this chaos. And as he is speaking some debris from the ceiling begins to fall on some of the crowd. They look up, covering their eyes and finally the light of the sun comes crashing through the ceiling and then a gurney with a paralyzed man on it is lowered down right in front of Jesus.

Those are pretty desperate measures. Can you imagine the nerve that would take to do something like that? What would drive these men to do this? They weren't there for themselves. They brought their paralytic friend to Jesus. I don't know about you, but this story inspires me. What a completely selfless act. They cared so much about their friend that they risked a lot of things. They didn't care what anyone thought. They had one goal and that was to make sure their friend had a life-changing encounter with Jesus.

I think the obvious question for us this morning is,

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"What lengths would I go to to introduce my friends and family to Jesus?"

Let's leave it there for now and we'll come back to that question in a few minutes.

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²⁰ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."

You gotta see the humour in this. Jesus is so funny. He never ceases to amaze me, or the people listening to him. He continually does and says the unexpected. Remember in the passage that Adrian preached on a couple weeks ago, where there was a paralytic man in Bethesda who wanted to be healed and Jesus asked him the most obvious question, “Do you want to get well?”

“What? Of course I want to get well. Isn’t that obvious?” It seems like a very stupid question. But really it’s not. Jesus does not ask stupid questions. So, why did he ask that seemingly obvious, and very unexpected question?

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Jesus asks the unexpected to find out the condition of our hearts and to engage us. That is what Jesus is all about. He wants us to build relationship with him.

In the text we are looking at this morning the friends of the paralytic man took a huge risk and went to great lengths to make sure their friend had an encounter with Jesus. They lower him down through the roof in front of Jesus. He is so impressed with their faith and the first thing out of his mouth is, **“Young man, your sins are forgiven.”**

What? Surely this is a typo. What was Jesus thinking? And in Matthew’s account Jesus says, **“Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven.”** That makes this even funnier. The man was not there to have his sins forgiven. His friends did not travel to Jesus, carrying their paralyzed friend on a stretcher, digging a hole in the roof of Peter’s house, risking ridicule and the cost of repairing the roof of a stranger’s house to have his sins forgiven. Jesus obviously knew this. So, what’s going on?

I don’t think this was said just for the sake of the sick man. You have to remember who was in Jesus’ audience. What he wanted was a reaction from the religious teachers so he could face them with the hard condition of their hearts. Jesus often did this. The parables he told were a probe that penetrated deep in the hearts of his listeners. The questions he asked served the same purpose. Everything Jesus did and said was for the purpose of seeing what was in the heart of people so he could move them on to God’s agenda. That is why he came.

He asks us the same kinds of questions.

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Jesus continually sticks his probe in our hearts to find out what we really care about.

So, how about you? What do you care about? Do you notice all the things Jesus is doing in and through CRBC? Do you praise him for it? June 11th we are going to have another Freedom Session grad where many people who have gone through the program this year and have been released from bondage to all kinds of things will give testimony to the freedom they received from Christ. We get to celebrate this together.

Christ Kids and Power House ministries have been busting at their seams with kids and families getting to know Jesus better. Our River Kids ministry has two sites and four more waiting in the wings where we have teams of youth and adults ministering to mostly low income families telling them about the love of Jesus. We have so many youth, young adults, and adults serving and growing and telling people about Jesus. We need to celebrate these things together. People are coming to Jesus.

We are going to be celebrating some of these stories at our AGM today. A couple weeks ago Adrian talked about this and how the name for this meeting, "Annual General Meeting", is sort of a boring name. It does not sound very enticing. It sounds like a boring meeting where all we do is get business done. The AGM and every "business" meeting we have should be to celebrate the mission of Jesus. That is the business we are in.

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The mission of Jesus should be the thing that captivates our thinking and our conversation and everything we do.

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Let me ask you a question. **What is more important to you, bringing people to Jesus or maintaining your tradition or the status quo?** I've got news for you. If the most important thing for you is making sure that change does not happen you are not on the mission of Jesus.

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Jesus has the church here for one reason and that is to bring people to him. That is the mission he gave us. Do not let your tradition keep you from doing what Jesus called us to. Let him use you.

Back to our text. The friends of the paralyzed man go to great lengths to bring their friend to Jesus. They lower him down through the roof right in front of Jesus. Jesus tells him his sins are forgiven. The Pharisees do not think this is cool at all.

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21 But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, "Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

These religious leaders don't celebrate the fact that this man had his sins forgiven. They don't care at all about that. Jesus knows their hearts.

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22 Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"

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What's in your heart? What do you really care about? Think about that question. It's so important. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, ***"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*** In other words, the thing that is most important to you will captivate you. You will fight for it at the expense of other things in your life. What is most important to you? Where is your treasure? What do you have your heart set on? What takes up your thoughts? What do you spend your time on, or your money, or your energy?

Here's what Paul says to the Jesus-followers in Colossae.

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Colossians 3:1–2 (NLT)

1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

After Paul says this he explains how to purge yourself of the earthly kind of life and how to put on the heavenly kind of life. And then at the very end of the passage he says this,

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¹⁶ Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.

It is the message of Jesus that should capture us. It is the message of Jesus that should so overtake everything we think, say and do. It is the message of Jesus that should drive us forward. It is the message of Jesus that should be our treasure. It should fill our lives.

Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of Jesus. Everything we are about as a church is about that. We will never allow our tradition to dictate the way forward - never. We will only allow the mission of Jesus to drive us forward. And that is why at our AGM potluck today we are going to celebrate Jesus and what he is doing through us at CRBC.

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Back to our text now. The religious people complain to Jesus after he forgives the sins of the paralyzed man. Jesus confronts them on their hypocrisy and the condition of their heart.

Luke 5:17–26 (NLT)

²³ Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? ²⁴ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” ²⁵ And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”

So, earlier the religious leaders rightly said that only God can forgive sins. Jesus didn’t disagree with them. He simply proved his authority to forgive sins by healing the man. He proved that he is in fact God. They were right in saying that only God can forgive sins, but their hearts were very wrong and hard, and closed to what Jesus was doing.

Contrast that to the crowds who were ***“gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”*** That should be our goal, to open our eyes to what he is doing, respond in praise, join him and to make his name famous.

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Jesus is our authority. We take our marching orders from him. And what he told us is that our job is to bring people to him.

That is what CRBC is here for. One of the newer members in our Growth Group said something very profound a few weeks ago. She is a relatively new follower of Jesus and she said she used to think that if she gave her life to Jesus her world would become smaller. She said she was so excited because she realized that the opposite is actually true. Her world has become much bigger.

Jesus came to free us from the things that bind us up. He came to liberate us from bondage to sin and slavery to the law. Jesus calls us into life with him. He doesn't call us to follow law, or tradition, or creeds and doctrines. He calls us to follow him, the risen Jesus.

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Matthew 11:28–30 (NLT)

28 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

Jesus came to free us, and he calls us to bring others to him so they can have that same kind of life changing encounter. That is why we exist as a church. That is why he has us here in Campbell River. That is why he has you in the neighbourhood where you live. That is why he has you in the school you attend, and the job you work at. That is why he has you in your business. He has given you breath so you can bring others to Jesus. He gives you your energy, and your money, and your time so you can bring others to have an encounter with Jesus.

Let's read one more passage in closing. This happened at the beginning the ministry of the disciples just before the passage we are looking at this morning.

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Luke 5:1–11 (NLT)

1 One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

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4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish." 5 "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again." 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear!

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7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. 8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm too much of a sinner to be around you."

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9 For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

So, Jesus' apprentices had been busy doing their business of fishing. Jesus showed them how to catch more fish to get their attention and grab their hearts as an analogy for what they should be using their business for. All the gifts, strengths, time, energy, and money God has gifted us with should primarily be used for introducing lost people to Jesus.

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When Jesus gets hold of our hearts with that vision our lives will begin to make sense. We will stop focusing on things we think give us meaning and focus our hearts rightly on eternal things. We will stop arguing about tradition and religion and our hearts will be rightly focused on the things of Jesus.

When we begin to do that as a church we will see revival come. It needs to first come to our hearts. When it does it will become contagious. We will learn to step out of our comfort zones and into the unknown. We will overcome our fear and Jesus will use us to bring many people to him. That is the call of God on our lives. Please come and help us to celebrate Jesus.



**Encounters with Jesus
Bringing People to Jesus
Luke 5:17-26
Week of May 29th, 2016**

Objective of this study: To allow Jesus to open our hearts to how he wants to use us to bring others to him.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 106:1-5** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

What's the craziest thing you've ever done to rescue someone else, or that someone else has done to rescue you?

Word (30 - 45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Luke 5:17-26
 1. Flesh out the setting of this encounter.
 2. Describe the various characters. What is motivating each of the characters in what they do or say?
 3. What is the conflict that develops?
 4. How did Jesus help set up this conflict?
 5. How did he use it for his purposes?
 6. What was the result?
 7. Describe the heart of the Pharisees. What did they miss out on?

Work (30 - 45 minutes)

Sermon Quote: "What's in your heart? What do you really care about? Think about that question. It's so important. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* In other words, the thing that is most important to you will captivate you. You will fight for it at the expense of other things in your life. What is most important to you? Where is your treasure? What do you have your heart set on? What takes up your thoughts? What do you spend your time on, or your money, or your energy?"

Sermon Quote: "What lengths would I go to to introduce my friends and family to Jesus?"

Sermon Quote: "The mission of Jesus should be the thing that captivates our thinking and our conversation."

Break up into smaller groups and with the above sermon quotes in mind, describe how Jesus is moving your heart right now. Make sure each person who wants to has a chance to share.

On your own at home, choose a passage from the sermon to marinate in: Colossians 3:1-17; Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 6:21. Allow the Holy Spirit to use his Word to build your faith.