

**Luke 5: 17-26** On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>18</sup> And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, <sup>19</sup> but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. <sup>20</sup> And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” <sup>21</sup> And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>22</sup> When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? <sup>24</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” <sup>25</sup> And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. <sup>26</sup> And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

On this particular day, Jesus was teaching a big crowd of people, with the number increasing all the time. The power of the Lord was with him, and in the background something amazing was brewing that would show the glory of God and be a revelation of Jesus Christ in a mighty way.

It is easy to get distracted by the practical details of what was going on, so that we don't notice the words Jesus spoke that are the very core of the reason he came. The crowd was getting bigger because of what they physically saw happening, but the words Jesus spoke are the most necessary and wonderful words anyone can hear.

**Jesus said ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you’**

We can be so distracted by what we see, yet the area of healing that we most need is something we cannot see. It is the thing that most cripples us, destroying our lives and leading to eternal death. The crowd were looking for this paralytic to be healed physically, but Jesus was looking to the root problem of the human condition - the paralysis and eternal death brought about by sin.

**Your soul is Jesus’ greatest concern, your eternity is Jesus’ greatest mission  
and the removal of your sin is Jesus’ greatest miracle**

The Pharisees and teachers of the law considered Jesus’ words to be blasphemy, as they knew that only God can forgive sin. They did not recognise that Jesus could say these words precisely because he is God in flesh. The Pharisees were on the outside and didn't know their greatest need but Jesus knew exactly what they were thinking.

None of us can hide from God – he knows us inside out. We must take care that we are not those who come to church but sit on the outside, not recognising Jesus for who he is.

Jesus takes what the Pharisees are thinking and exposes their unbelief to the crowd. The Pharisees only saw a man. They did not see Jesus as

- the God who took on flesh and who could not only heal physically but also spiritually
- the Messiah who would ultimately give his life so that the guilty might be forgiven

The word **forgiven** has such deep meaning. Between two people, it means that a relationship has been renewed in spite of wrongdoing. The forgiveness that Jesus gives is so much more than human forgiveness because it cannot be changed or erased. It is forgiveness that puts sin away for good.

- God’s justice is satisfied because Jesus paid the ultimate penalty for our sin, so that it can no longer be held against us

- The guilt of sin has been removed because we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ

**If you have asked Jesus Christ into our life, you can say with confidence that your sin has been totally removed from you. God does not see your sin, but instead he sees his Son who died for you.**

Jesus could bring healing to this man and had authority to say your sins are forgiven. With a word, this man's life was transformed because his sin was dealt with. Jesus' words brought immediate and total healing.

This man got up with a double cure. Not only were his sins forgiven, but Jesus also gave him physical healing.

The four men who brought him to Jesus were on a mission, and their actions give us a prompt to respond to the call to mission that is on all our lives.

We are not told the names of these four men, but they do something very special for this disabled man. We don't know if he was a friend or relative, or even how long they've known him, but they put in a lot of effort to bring him to where Jesus was, carrying him on his bed. When they got there, it was impossible to get in because of the crowd. However, this was a team that was going to give up. They were determined to get the man to Jesus at all costs, and were prepared to persevere. They were a team with a mission, though their expectation was for physical healing.

As we read God's word, we find many accounts of people used by God to his glory whose names we are not given. They serve to the glory of God for the furtherance of his kingdom.

- The servants at the wedding banquet who filled the clay jars with water and left Jesus to do the miracle
- The Samaritan woman at the well, whose conversation with Jesus led to her calling the townspeople to come and hear a man who had told her everything that she ever did. Because of her testimony many Samaritans came to Jesus and believed
- The Philippian jailer who believed because of the words spoken by Paul and Silas, and then brought that word to his whole family so that they were all baptised
- The 300 men led by Gideon who God used to defeat 120,000 Midianites.

God puts his people in situations designed to save others, and even to save nations. It is what God can do through his people that resounds to his glory, not what we can do in our own strength. God can deal with the impossible. He can remove the burden of fear and all that holds us back from serving him and he will use us to his glory. It is not you and I who do amazing things. It is God who does them and he will use the weak and nameless for his glory.

### **It is God who will do the miracles**

The four men had a heart for their friend, and Jesus recognised their faith (**v20** above). We too are called to be men and women of faith who will trust him and stand on the promises of God. What God has said will never fail. We are not left as orphans and Jesus will go with us by his Spirit. Jesus has given us all we need to go forward on the mission field. He will do the miracle. It is all about Jesus.

The four men were working as team – they carried out their mission together. We are not told if they had any particular skills but they were working together to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus.

Mission cannot exist without people working together. There are many working behind the scenes of frontline ministry to the nations. We might feel some guilt about not being in frontline mission, but we are on mission if:

- We give to mission work
- We pray regularly for missionaries
- We write to missionaries to encourage them

J O Fraser (missionary to the Lisu people) said this:

**I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in overseas missions  
by the prayers of earnest believers at home**

Anything we do to help others to bring people to Jesus (even removing a roof and maybe repairing it afterwards!!) is part of mission. The four men did not know what they would need to do when they set out to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus that day. They had not known they would need to break through a roof, but they set out with a clear goal and were prepared to do all that was necessary to achieve that goal. The missionaries we support crave our earnest and frequent prayers for the work they are doing to bring people to Jesus, to the glory of God.

We are not all called to be on the frontline of mission, but God uses us all in different ways to bring people to himself.

**We are called to bring people to Jesus and then we can leave him to do the miracle.**

The taking apart of a roof was worth it to bring the miracle of grace to a sinner, and there is nothing that is not worth doing to bring about kingdom growth. The paralyzed man could not get to Jesus by himself and might have asked for his friends' help, but he found himself in front of Jesus because of them. Jesus said to him 'rise, pick up your bed and go home' (v24 above). His sins had been forgiven and now he had physical healing. In obedience, he got up, took his bed and went home glorifying God.

**Obedience is a mark of a transformed life in Christ.**

The paralyzed man came with what he had but left with so much more than he could have imagined. Though the man had not asked for it, Jesus poured out his grace upon him to forgive his sins. What he had now received was to be used for his great mission back at home, telling his family about Jesus.

We need to be actively involved in bringing people to Jesus, in any way we can, in whatever opportunities God gives us. We need to be actively working both individually and together in mission because lives matter. In **Luke 5:16** we read that Jesus **would withdraw to desolate places and pray**. He came before his Father and brought to him all that lay ahead of him on any particular day. We should be doing the same, bringing to him our families, the chores of the day and the people we will meet. We need to ask him for his help to be witnesses, to be the people God has called us to be and minister into peoples' lives by what we do and say. God can use the strangest of things to his glory. We need to use all our resources, and all that we have and are, for kingdom growth.

The four men were working together and as a church, we need to work together for that ultimate goal – kingdom growth.

- Are we, as a group of God's people, seeing the needs of others?
- Are we pulling together in every possible way for kingdom growth?
- Are we consulting our Father in heaven to be servant-hearted like the four men?
- Are we men and women of faith trusting in the Lord Jesus?
- Are we going to go out and tell people about the Lord Jesus?
- Are we praying in earnest for those opportunities to reach the lost?

Heavenly Father, stir in our hearts a desire to reach the lost. Give us a hunger and a thirst to see your kingdom grow.