**Friend, Your Sins Are Forgiven**

Luke 5:17-26

Key Verse 5:20

“When Jesus saw their faith, He said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’”

In today’s passage we want to think about how people need the Lord and how they need one another. In particular we want to think about, how do we become friends of Jesus and how do we become good friends to one another?

**First, the difference between the Pharisees and teachers of the law and the friends of a paralyzed man. (17-19)**

Look at 17-19. “17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.”

In verse 17, we see that while Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law came from every village of Galilee and Judea and even the capital Jerusalem, where several of them surely served in the Temple. And they came to Jesus and sat right in the front row seats before Jesus. They took the best seats in the house. Even though there was limited seating, the religious leaders used their clout and position to secure for themselves the most comfortable chairs and sofas in the place. Everyone else had to sit on the floor or stand against the walls or were left outside and had to listen over the PA system. Jesus said that He came to heal the sick, He didn’t come to those who were well. Those who came to Jesus came because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And finally their shepherd came and now they were told to take a number and wait in line because the religious leaders wanted to sit in front of Jesus and listen to Him. But unlike the people the religious leaders did not come to repent and receive new life in Jesus, they came to find fault with Jesus. They wanted to find something Jesus said that they could use against Him. The religious leaders were supposed to be the shepherds of God’s flock. They were supposed to be good friends of God and good friends to the people, but instead they only cared about themselves and their welfare and their condition and their position. Everyone and everything else took a back seat.

Look at verse 18, “18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.” In this verse we see the difference of several good friends of a paralyzed man. The first thing we want to think about is their friendship with one another. What makes someone to be a good friend of another? I asked this question to several of my Bible students and they gave me some good answers, they told me that good friends spend time together, have like interests and values, look after each other, they don’t criticize each other, or judge one another and they treat each other the way they wanted to be treated. So how did these friends and the paralyzed man become friends? It appears that this man was not born paralyzed. And surely their friendship grew before this man became paralyzed, because afterwards, there was very little chance for them to be good friends. What does a paralyzed man have in common with healthy men? What can they share together to build their relationship together? Surely their friendship began before this man became paralyzed.

Perhaps, one day while they were having a donkey race, the one fell off his donkey and broke his back and became paralyzed. Perhaps, one of his friends fell off a cliff and was hanging on the side and the paralyzed man reached down and got him, but while pulling him up, he himself slipped and fell to the bottom and became paralyzed, while his friend was rescued. Perhaps, growing up they had been the town trouble makers, stealing chickens or cucumbers together from the local farmer. Perhaps, they were known as the Five Bandito’s or the Five Amigo’s. Perhaps they played together on the local high school basketball team. We don’t know all the details, but we do know that they were good friends. So much so that they were willing and able and took their good friend to Jesus when they found out He was close by and in town. So they made a stretcher and carried their friend to Jesus.

These friends were really good friends because they brought their friend to Jesus. In this world I’ve known lots of people and consider many friends, but my real friends, my true friends, my true family all know Jesus. Real friendship always has Jesus in the middle of the relationship. I’ve had friends come and go, but the only friendships that have lasted are those who know Christ, like I do. In Jn 13:34-35 it reads, “34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The real mark of Jesus’ disciples is their love and friendship toward one another. The world doesn’t have it, so when they see it, they can’t understand it, they’ve never seen it before and when they ask how is it possible, they learn it’s because we are disciples of Jesus. I really love the sisters common life. I’ve talked to the sisters who live in the common life and one thing I can see is they are really growing to be like real sisters and good friends to one another. I’m very happy for them. They are all very busy and they are all very different, but I can see that they are growing in their love for one another. That’s a beautiful thing. I heard that the fellowship group that is studying the Bible with Shep. Robert for a while had not been able to meet, but they are beginning to meet again. I’m very happy for them also and I hope that this time they would think about each other in this group and also grow in their love and friendship for one another in that group, including my oldest son Peter.

Well for some reason these friends brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Perhaps, they had heard the stories of Jesus’ powerful healings. Perhaps, one of the friends had been healed himself and knew first hand what Jesus could do or perhaps it was a relative or someone else they knew who had been healed by Jesus, but whatever the case, these friends knew that Jesus could help their friend walk once again. They had faith that Jesus could help their good friend, if only they could bring him to Jesus. And so they carefully looked at Jesus’ itinerary and found out He was going to be in their town at the butcher’s house the next day. So they got up early and took their paralyzed friend to go see Jesus, but when they got there, to their great surprise the place was jammed packed; there was no room for them to bring their friend to Jesus. Look at verse 19, “19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.” These men could have been discouraged; they could have quit saying, “We tried.” They could have said, “Maybe another time.” Instead, these friends were so determined to find a way for their paralyzed friend to meet Jesus right then and there, that they climbed the roof and made a hole in it and lowered their friend right smack dab in front of Jesus! These friends were not taking ‘No’ for an answer; they were not going to allow any obstacle to stop them from bringing their friend to Jesus; whatever it took they were willing and able to do.

These men were so different than the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The Pharisees cared less about the people, even though they were supposed to be the very ones who brought people before God Almighty. They hindered people and reserved the places of honor for themselves. They thought only about themselves, whereas these friends thought only of their friend. I don’t know if there was any law broken by making a hole in someone’s house, but at the very least the owner was not going to be happy with them. Probably, going to make them fix and repair it, perhaps put on a whole new roof to compensate for what they did. Perhaps, they were risking being arrested or beat up. Surely, everyone there was mad at them for cutting in front of them; “How dare they!” But none of that mattered to these friends, no matter what the cost to themselves, these friends were going to do whatever it took to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

I’m personally very impressed with Hope Lim. I remember how he was a good friend to one brother who was very depressed. He was the only one who took any interest or care toward this person. I remember he used to go to this persons house and would spend hours and even spend the night at this persons house, because he cared about this person. I heard that sometimes he would visit and this person would spend his time in front of his computer and Hope would just sit there next to him. I don’t know if Hope tried to bring his friend to Jesus in order to receive Jesus’ sin forgiving love and healing touch, but I’m still impressed by what Hope did. I also know that when Abe Kim came from Minnesota, Hope befriended him. I don’t know how many others took the time to be Abe’s friend, but Hope did. I hope their fellowship was fellowship in Christ. Again, human friendship is good, but it really is very limited and not life giving. Only friendship that builds one another up in Jesus is life giving.

As many know, every Sunday I have an eating fellowship and I try invite coworkers and even friends Mari, I and our sons and daughters have met. Many wonder is it effective or helpful. Mari and my family, including our daughters and even our newest son, Samuel serve others with Jesus’ love to one another and to others. Last Sunday, I was amazed at my house. Doru joined us and it was such sweet fellowship in Christ. My house was like the United Nations. Doru is from Romania, his friend Red Van is a Kurd from Turkey, Maggie is Chinese, Sam is from Korea, Mari is from Japan, and I’m as American as you get. We also had the whole family of my sons wrestling team join us and they are Mexican. Last Sunday was to share the love of Christ with this family, they were so moved and our friendship grew among one another. On other Sundays we don’t bring any outside guests, but we love one another and serve one another. We build each other up and encourage one another in Jesus. Right now we are praying for one friend of our daughter Maggie to come join us, her name is Diane. We are also praying for another family whose son is on our sons wrestling team. The daughter already agreed to begin studying the Bible with Mari, because she wants to improve her Japanese. And my son Peter is praying to invite and bring several of his friends from his Business Fraternity and from his college to our home that we can build a friendship and eventually to bring them to Jesus, so they can experience His sin forgiving love personally.

Are we such good friends to others? Are we making friendships with others and becoming others friends, so that we can bring them to Jesus? Or are we like the Pharisees and teachers of the law who only think about ourselves first and foremost? Do we make ourselves to be good friends to others, thinking of them and their need even if there is a cost to us? Are we good friends who bring others to Jesus?

**Second, Friend, your sins are forgiven (20)**

Look at verse 20, “20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The first thing we see in this verse is that Jesus saw these friends faith. Now faith is not something you can touch, smell or see. Faith is intangible, but Jesus saw their faith; what is it He saw? He saw their action of cutting a hole in the roof and lowering their friend in front of Jesus and Jesus attributed it to their faith. James 2:14-17 reads, “14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” These friends deeds revealed their faith and Jesus could clearly see it. Hebrews 4:12 says, “The Word is alive and active,”; and in the same way faith is not an intangible matter, it is alive and active.

When Jesus saw these men’s faith, He said to the paralytic, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” He called this man, “Friend.” In reality these men were his friend, but Jesus identified Himself as His friend. Jesus was so moved by what they had done for their friend that He Himself called this man “Friend.” Please look at Mat. 25:34-40, “34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” When these men were friends to this man, they were being friends to Jesus and so Jesus called this man friend.

The next thing to notice is that Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven.” This is the first place in Luke where Jesus tells someone, “Your sins are forgiven.” Every time Jesus healed someone up till now, it is not recorded that He said such a thing, only to this man. Why? When these men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus they were wanting Jesus to heal him; they wanted him to be made whole once again, to be like they themselves were; they were not thinking about righteousness or forgiveness of sins. But they really had faith in Jesus who came from God and also who will be able to help their friend. When Jesus saw their faith like that, He could elevate their request and not only healed this man physically, but forgave this man His sins. Jesus had authority to forgive sins and their faith compelled Jesus to forgive this man his sins.

Mat. 17:20 says, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can move the mountains.” But 1 Cor. 13:2b reads, “[I]f I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” These men coupled their faith with love for their friend. James 2:21-22 reads, “21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together,and his faith was made complete by what he did.” These mens faith was made complete by what they did for their friend. And as Abraham was considered righteous, Jesus now made their paralyzed friend righteous by forgiving his sins.

These friends demonstrated their faith with love, because knowing or believing Jesus is the Son of God that in itself is not the point, because Jesus was sent by God so that we would know how much God loves us. So believing Jesus is the Son of God that itself is not the point, having faith, great faith is not the point. As James said faith should have deeds, but what kind of deeds? Is it to move a mountain? It is to show the love of God to love one another. Just as James said, “15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” So these friends believed that Jesus was able to help, that is faith, but they put their faith into practice by loving their friend and thats where Jesus honored their faith, because they put their faith into practice by loving one another; in this case, they loved someone humanly speaking who could not love them back.

Jesus really wanted this kind of exercise of faith; He encouraged us to have such faith. Mat. 18:19-20 which reads, “19 “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” These men agreed to bring their friend to Jesus, they really agreed in faith in Jesus Name. They really tried to help their friend in Jesus’ Name. And they co-worked together. And their coworking was also an exercise of their faith. So Jesus honored their coworking and Jesus did even more than asked or imagined; they wanted him to be healed, but Jesus not only gave physical healing, He gave righteousness. Righteousness means no longer condemned, no longer a sinner, your sins have been forgiven. This righteousness was brought by faith. But what is amazing is that their faith was coming from love; love one another. This is what Jesus commanded.

These men wanted their friend to have what they had, they didn’t just selfishly say, “Oh, it’s too bad you don’t have it.” In the same way, Jesus wanted us to have the blessing of being children of God, to have His Kingdom, He wanted us to have it. And for that reason Jesus came to this earth; out of His compassion for us He came. When these men brought their friend out of their compassion, desiring that “I want this man to have what we have,” it was exactly what Jesus had come to do for all people.

**Third, the disunity and criticisms of those who should know better (21-26)**

Look at verses 21-25, “21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” 22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.”

In these verses we see the religious leaders begin to criticize Jesus for saying, “Your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees were supposed to be the ones who offered intercessory prayer for the people asking God to forgive people of their sins. They should have been happy to hear that this man’s sins were forgiven, but they were too busy and interested in the technicalities and making sure that the law wasn’t broken or no one was blaspheming. They lost sight of their real job. They should have been the most happy people to see a man receive forgiveness of his sins and to be healed, but they were too busy with doctrine. They were smart but useless. They studied the Scriptures diligently, but missed the point that Jesus is the Messiah who came to save men from their sins. They only brought criticism after criticism and brought about disunity. They should have been leading the praise toward God for what Jesus had done, not criticising it because it didn’t follow their doctrinal beliefs. I really thank God for Msn. Isaac who always said, “Everything is open for debate and discussion and everything is changeable, but not the Gospel or the mission.” We are to make disciples of all nations. We may have difference of opinions on how to serve God’s mission, but we should not criticize one another, but fully support one another in bringing others to Christ. The proof is in the pudding. Changed lives is the proof, not just doctrinal integrity. Don’t misunderstand me, doctrine is important, but doctrine shouldn’t divide us. Doctrine shouldn’t be used to criticize one another, doctrine never should divide us. Doctrine should always steer us to Jesus.

Look at verse 26, “26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

It is said that to raise one child takes a whole village or community. To make one disciple of Jesus takes the community of believers, or the local church. What made our ministry so successful and to grow so amazingly and powerfully when it was young was the fact that everyone worked together to bring people to Jesus. They prayed together and their faith was matched with their actions of love for others and people received the forgiveness of their sins and were healed. This is the secret for us to continue to experience such an amazing work of God. We want to see remarkable things among us. We want to see Jesus forgive our friends and heal them completely, we don’t want to be the ones who bring disunity and complain about one another. We need one another to serve God’s work in this generation. May God help us be good friends to God’s flock, to one another and most importantly to Jesus; to exercise our faith with love.

**One Word: Friend, Your sins are forgiven.**