Sermon 2.1

SELFLESS FRIENDS

Generously Loving

Luke 5:17-26

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. 20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

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. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

KEY OUTCOME

Faith is best displayed in how we are willing to show love to those who are closest to us. What we are willing to sacrificially do for our friends often exposes what is in our hearts. If we are to become like Christ, we must be willing to sacrifice what is easy and what we want for ourselves for those we call our friends. This is what truly loving our neighbor looks like.

CONTEXT

Jesus was teaching, probably midweek, to a group that included many people of power and importance from the local community. Some men carrying a paralyzed friend, tried to get an audience with Jesus. Not being able to get close to him, they went above and beyond to get their friend to Jesus. When Jesus entered a house they went to the roof and lowered their friend into Jesus' presence. They didn't worry about protocol or social norms or what people might say or think about them. They knew that Jesus had the power to help their friend, so they would stop at nothing to get to Jesus. Because of their great faith, Jesus healed the man.

SERMON POINTS

1

Faith is Action More Than Words

It is one thing to say we love someone. It is another thing to actually show love to someone. In this story we meet some men who, not only said they loved their friend, but they actually did something about it. They brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus to be healed and when they couldn't get through the crowd to Jesus they did an extraordinary thing—they climbed to the roof of the house and lowered their friend through the tiles to Jesus. They demonstrated through their actions that they loved their friend and believed Jesus could heal him.

Tell a story about a person who says they will do one thing but, instead, doesn't follow through or does something completely different than what they said they would do. Talk about how this damages credibility.

2

Live Out The Gospel

Sometimes great acts of faith can require us to publicly take a stand for our friends that may offend others. This is both an exercise of faith and a test of faith that will often stretch us.

Tell a story of someone who has stepped out in faith in a way that went against what everyone told them to do - even created embarrassment - yet God honored them for their action. Or tell a story of a time when you or someone you know should have stepped out in faith for a friend but didn't due to potential public ridicule. If time permits tell both

3

To Generously Lead is to Humbly Serve

Our primary relationships (our closest personal friendships, co-workers, and family), are a key arena for us to live out the gospel and the place where our personal discipleship is tested and refined.

When we commit our lives to living out the gospel message and extravagantly loving others, especially those closest to us, God does immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine. Because they brought their friend to Jesus, he was healed. But he wasn't the only one changed that day. The response of everyone in the crowd is worthy of note: "Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God."

Tell a story about someone who has been known to act selflessly toward another and the impact it had on all who were involved.

SUMMARY

Jesus said loving our neighbor is more important than anything else. Truly loving our neighbor requires self-sacrifice and stretches our faith. What lengths are we willing to go to for our friends? What are we willing to do to share the love of Christ with them? If we are to become more Christlike we MUST understand that this means we are to become selfless and suffer through sacrifice as Jesus did for us. When we, as people of faith, do this as a church, we demonstrate to the world that our faith is more than an intellectual exercise. When we sacrificially love others, the world sees God in us and we become the gospel. This is the power of the gospel at work.

Encourage your church to take a step of faith and **help a friend** in a very tangible way this week.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Challenge your church to make a list of their closest friends and any needs they might have. Then pray and ask God to show them how they can begin to invest in one of these relationships in a way that goes above and beyond what they have done in the past. Encourage your church to take a step of faith and help a friend in a very tangible way this week.