

**1-2 CAPERNAUM · CROWD**

Immediately 1

“Kaf”: - podunk town - everybody knows everybody. The day started like any other day – but it continued and ended like no other. Today children left the playground early. Teenagers ignored their phones. Why? **The presence of Jesus always draws a crowd, and always interrupts.** We do not know what Jesus preached but we what Jesus *did*. His works. Action. Religion not from an office or out of a dictionary but on the road of reality. #real #authentic #relevant

3 PARALYTIC · FOUR FRIENDS

Imagine this man’s life - “walk” in this man’s shoes for a moment. Sleep in his sleeping bag for a moment. Smell the scent of no shower in weeks, months? Here is a man who has probably given up on a life reduced to a state of vegetation. Motto: Too much to die, too little to live. No more hope; no goals except daily survival. No more living to one’s fullest potential, no more doing your best, no more picking yourself up by the bootstraps, no more pulling yourself together. It’s too late for all that. Life not in the fast lane but in the parking lot. Life at a rest stop without facilities; just picnic tables. But life’s no picnic. Trash cans that haven’t been emptied in a while (someone must have dumped fish in one). But now a glimmer of hope: “it was heard that He was in the house”. The news of Jesus in town spread like wild fire (faster than internet, cell phones, or gossip!). The flame starts flickering again as it smells the scent of oxygen. You’ve been down for a while – but things are looking up again. One more chance. One more shot!

4 “CAN(‘T)”

Hope burst like bubble. It’s like holding the carrot before the proverbial donkey’s nose and then quickly pulling it away. Can we grasp the tragedy of the moment? Here’s someone who wants to get to Jesus, and he found some church members who were not too busy to get him man to Jesus. So close and yet so far. They tried. Almost. Sorry bud. A for effort, right? May be next time ...

Remember this: When there is no way in, and no way out, no way through, and no way around, and it looks like the only way is down, there is still up! Up! It’s so short. Up is the road less traveled. Up is neither north nor south, east or west. Up is not down. Up is up! Up is where God is. Up is space, unlimited, free, open, fresh, new, up! Up is how you get down to Jesus! If up is not on *your* map you need a bigger map!

The first part of verse 4 is not even a complete sentence; a solution follows the comma! Grammar 101: never stop, never quit, never give up before a comma! **Don’t place a period in your life where the Bible only puts a comma!** A comma means there is more to come! A comma means future!

Uncovering the roof?! Presumably not part of the church board agenda, the elders’ meeting, the scripts of the church manual. Away with the roof?! Not a line item in the balanced budget. Away with the roof? They don’t teach you *that* at the Seminary. **But Away with the roof was the only way to get the man to Jesus, and that’s what really mattered!** *The Gospel has to go through the roof to get the man to Jesus!*

Good News does not always mean a sermon from a pulpit, but it does mean away with the ceilings of human limitations. *Away with the roof!* Sometimes Good News means sweat on your forehead, dirt underneath your fingernails, but eyes gleaming with the determination: Away with the roof, we are going to get the man to Jesus!

There’s a detail here I don’t want you to miss. And surprisingly, it’s not about Jesus, nor about the paralytic. It’s about those 4 guys whose names we don’t even know. I don’t know what they had accomplished in life so far, what degrees they had acquired, how much money they had accumulated, what car they drove, what kind of house they lived in, how many acres they had, who they voted for, how many friends they had on Facebook, how many Subscribers they had on their channel, what kind of credit card they had in their wallet, what kind of retirement portfolio the had. We know but one thing: they didn’t quit when quitting would have been easy and reasonable. They didn’t quit because somebody else’s life was at stake here! *Quit? Never!*

They could have said, “Oh well, we tried.” They could have postponed it: “Maybe tomorrow.” Away with the roof? Too expensive. Never done that before. And too much trouble. It might offend somebody. After all, the roof was built 32 years ago by the head deacon.” “The wood came from the original chapel.” Better not upset the apple cart. They could have blamed the crowd (gotta blame someone, right?!) But No. They got the man to Jesus!

Dare I point out something else: One of the 4 guys came from the US, the other from Mexico, the 3rd from Puerto Rico, the 4th from South Korea. May be one of them was a woman. One dropped out of high school and got a GED, the other had PhD. One was small, the other tall. I doubt any of them were pastors or preachers. They were “just laymen”. But they simply worked together for one goal: **Away with the roof so we can get the man to Jesus!**

5 FAITH · FORGIVENESS

But now for the real action: “When Jesus saw their faith.” You have got to love this line. I thought faith was an abstract noun. You can’t see, touch, hear, or taste faith! *But here faith has a face!* Living, active, caring, daring faith can be touched and smelled. Faith has a profile that leaves unmistakable skid marks on the road of life. Faith moves

2x4s. Faith pulls out nails and screws. Faith puts sinner and Savior on eye level! I don't know how much faith the man had but mustard seed size faith is enough for Jesus to work with!

There is just one problem: he came to be healed; but now he is forgiven . . . hint that his sickness was caused by sin?

👉 *"The secret cause of the affliction that had made this man a fearful spectacle to his friends and a burden to himself was in his own life. He had been fascinated by the pleasures of sin, and had thought to make life a grand carnival. He did not dream of becoming a terror to the world and the reproach of his family. He thought his time could be spent in innocent folly. But once in the downward path, his feet rapidly descended. Intemperance and frivolity perverted the noble attributes of his nature, and Satan took absolute control of him. Remorse came too late. When he would have sacrificed wealth and pleasure to regain his lost manhood, he had become helpless in the grasp of the evil one. He had placed himself on the enemy's ground, and Satan had taken possession of all his faculties"* (DA 256).

Jesus. It's the first red ink in the story. Mind you, human reactions are often: "Hey, cripple! Sinner. It's your own fault. Don't you know: You reap what you sow?! Your mother was right: you got yourself into this mess, you get yourself out of this mess! Should have paid more attention during that week of prayer, eh? Should have attended ASI Convention in Phoenix! ... But Jesus calls the man - "Son". Son, not sinner. Child, not cripple.

Forgiveness: present tense! It's a verb, an action! It takes place right then and there. Forgiveness from Jesus is not a future promise, a down payment, a promissory note, a hope, a "may be one of these days", not a cheap "Well, I hope it'll all work out for you." No, forgiveness in the presence of Jesus is a present reality!

🎵 Jürgen Werth: *"Like a triumph after tears, like a fire in the night, an open door in a wall, for the sun to shine its light. Like a letter after silence, an unexpected hi, like a leaf on dried up branches, an I-love-you-anyway-kiss. That's forgiveness, that's what true peace must be like. That is forgiveness, that is grace and mercy for you and I alike. Like a rain shower in the desert, fresh dew on weary land, songs of home for M.I.As., former enemies, hand in hand. Like a key in a prison, like a land after lost on sea, like a road out of trouble, like a face with a smile on it. Like a word from closed lips, like a glance, that awakens hope, like a light for ships at night, like a continent discovered new. Like the spring, like the dawn, like a song, like a poem, like life, like love, like God Himself, true light from above. This is forgiveness, this is grace and mercy for you and I alike.*

Oh moment of forgiveness, take off your shoes and coat and stay a while. Do you know what forgiveness really is?

Greek: compound verb (preposition joined to a mi-class verb). Here the dictionary definition of ἀφιῆμι *aphiēmi*: "forgive, remit of sins or debts, allow, let be, tolerate, leave, leave behind, forsake, neglect, let go, dismiss, divorce."

To be forgiven means God completely takes away, remits, leaves, leaves behind, forsakes, dismisses your sins. Could you use some taking away, remitting, leaving, leaving behind, forsaking, letting go, dismissing of your sins? Are you paralyzed? Would you like to lie on a bed right now, lowered through the roof, and the eyes of Jesus meeting yours, His soft but strong voice telling you, "Your sins are forgiven." Period. No Undo button. No going back. No U-Turn. Forgiven. Taken away, remitted, left, left behind, forsaken, let go, dismissed. Done. You 2.0!

Would be nice if the story ended right here. Maybe quickly squeeze in a healing and let the poor soul go home (and the home owner fix his roof!). Like a children's story: puppy lost, little boy/girl prays, puppy found. "And now you may go quietly back to your seats." But life doesn't always work like the children's stories do. *Confrontation . . .*

6-7 CONFRONTATION

Wherever and whenever God's grace is at work, Satan starts to stir his pot. Right when you get your life back together - wham!, another blow. There in the front row where forgiveness just took place sits envy, strife, and hatred. Cold conniving, distrusting, back-biting, poisonous and poisoning. Insinuation. Accusation. Good followed in lock step by Bad. Faith followed by frowns. Forgiveness followed by unforgiveness. *Good News - all too good to be true?!*

Jesus has not even healed the man yet! But faith does not avoid reality; it faces reality head-on, even thrives under confrontation - for a new and better reality!

8-11 HEALING

Immediately 2

Jesus confronts evil *immediately* (42x in Mark!), and out of this confrontation arises healing! Jesus could have left the man just forgiven but still paralyzed and I think the guy would have been a happy! Don't shy away from confrontation. Don't walk out. Don't quit! Let Jesus have the final word. *Quit? Never!* Because forgiveness was a start, not the end.

Authority to forgive: given to Him in a special ceremony in the presence of Lucifer and the angels!

👉 *"The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him"* (SR 13).

👉 *"The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. The spiritual healing was followed by physical restoration. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. ... The peace which He alone can give, would impart vigor to the mind, and health to the body"* (DA 270).

12 MATTRESS · MISSION

Immediately 3

Paralytic: weakness → witness! burden → blessing!

People: at first hindrance; now witness → reaction: glorify God! Personal evangelism turned into a global mission!

I've had people carry me to Jesus. Who will you carry to Jesus ... immediately?!