

## RAISING THE ROOF -MARK 2 v1-12

There are two words that I thought I'd never see next to each other in my lifetime Preach – Helen so as that is still a very unlikely happening I'm just going to share some thoughts with you, so welcome to my world.

This reading is all about Jesus healing and the wholeness that in this case comes through the forgiveness of sins. I've called this section 'raising the roof' for a very good reason. Definition of this phrase is to, show great enthusiasm, to make a noise, to be visible and audible..... I think I've pretty much got that down.

The word has gone out, Jesus the teacher and healer has come to town and the place He's at is quite small and packed to the rafters, well that's not surprising if Jesus appeared today at the 20,00-seater O2 arena the people would be overflowing onto the streets.

Now what faith and trust in God these four men showed in bringing their friend to Jesus. Their desire was so strong that the mass of people barring their entrance didn't stop them. There was no timidity, no refusal, no barrier, no inhibition that they couldn't scale in the drive to see their friend healed, in fact we don't really know how many times they tried to get an avenue through to Jesus before they literally began raising the roof by tearing a hole in it. They had realised an important truth that hope, without faith and action, is just wishful thinking. So, they came together and acted.

As this guy (shall we call him Guy as we don't have a name) was lowered into the room his eyes would have been focused on Jesus the source of his healing, not on the people in the room, not those friends who were praying for him, this was his one to one time with his saviour. Just as it is during your time of laying on of hands.

I've often wondered on reading about this miracle in Mark and Luke how the paralytic man was handling it. Jesus addresses him tenderly so he might have been a younger man with his life blighted by this paralysis. At first, he was told "Son, your sins are forgiven" Great! but now, Jesus is distracted He's having to deal with those who are doubting His God given power to forgive sins and they are actually questioning His right to do this. Really? Today of course we would be saying Tut tut, well, as we know hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Meanwhile our guy is lying there on his bed still unable to move.

What on earth must have been going through his mind then? Have you ever been in a highly charged situation where time stands still, when a second seems like an eternity but your brain is racing?

He'd heard Jesus tell him that his sins **are** forgiven, not can, or will be, if you do such and such. Just a simple statement of fact. So was he lying there trying to assimilate this wonderful thing. Was he calling to mind all his sins, recognising each one in an act of repentance, or was the realization beginning to dawn on him that he was still bedridden? He'd been brought to Jesus looking for deliverance from his situation but he was still physically ill, so might his faith had been wavering a little, was his hope fading or was he just plain disappointed? I'm sure that we can understand how that might have been happening, for many of us set out to trust God for our healing and deliverance but unfortunately discouragement and fear soon take over - we've been praying for goodness sake - and nothing seems to be happening. I use the word *seem* here because when we pray the bible assures us that we *are* heard, so why is our situation not changing?

Rest assured, have confidence, although sometimes we are not aware of it a change is taking place. a healing **is** coming about maybe not as we asked but it is happening within us each time we reach out to Him in faith. Never doubt that, for He says, "I have heard your prayers and seen your tears I will heal you" What power there is in those words.

Ok, back to Guy. We've heard that he had a home to go to. We are not told his age, he might have been a younger man for Jesus addressed him tenderly as Son as his own Father called Him. He had come before Jesus looking for a *physical* healing. but you see Jesus knew that this man's needs were deeper seated than what was visible to the world or even to himself. He knew that those unforgiven sins festering within him were causing so much harm to his soul that they had to be dealt with first.

Now after teaching the sceptics and teachers of the law, that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins because He **is** God, for the Father and He are one. He then demonstrates and underlines His God given power by making it visible to all the people there. Turning back to him he says" Get up, take up your mat and go home" I love that it's so matter of fact, isn't it? So natural, so normal for Jesus just an everyday miraculous thing, as I believe our healing *will* be for us, not *if*, for that's a given, but when? That is in our Lords time He knows when we are ready

Now Guys healing was complete and everyone was amazed

Right, now let's take a look at how important his friends were in all of this? Well it took four unselfish people not putting themselves first and being united in their love for a fellow human being. It wouldn't have been easy to carry and lower this man on a mat and definitely would have needed the four to do it, three would have made it unstable and for just two the burden would have been too heavy. Jesus saw that they had made their faith visible by their action, He saw how they had not given up on their friend, how they had not given up on believing in the grace of God. Even though I sense that the paralytic must have been ill for a while they'd kept their burning desire for his healing alive by this mindset of faith. In Marks chapter it says Jesus saw this in them and they were blessed. I like to think that they were blessed ten-fold just as we are today when we obey God's teaching. Remember? Bring just one to Jesus and you have booked your place.

So, what is the stand out message from today's reading? For me it's this. We should be as eager to be in the presence of Jesus as Guy and his four friends. People of faith should bring the sick to meet Christ because in many cases they simply cannot make it on their own, they need *us* to carry them for a while. And how much easier it is if we all carry a corner of the mat. What kind of friend are *we* being, how strong is *our* desire for them to be made whole?

Here's a question posed by the definition given at the beginning of this talk. As a church are we active in displaying our enthusiasm, making a noise, being audible, being visible Christians? That was just rhetorical by the way, just something for you to ask yourselves.

But what joy! Can you imagine the celebration as Guy returned to his house rejoicing in the miracle he'd received and don't you think that as his friends joined him, that all these things were on display? Of course, they were. I so would have loved to have been invited, what a party they must have had, praising the Lord and really raising the roof. Amen

