

PBC20060429PM

Bringing Down The House

[Pastor Graham did his version of this the following day]

Mark 2:1-12

April 29, 2006 • Saturday 6:00 PM • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, Bringing Down The House]

I know you enjoyed the blessing of that song as I did tonight and I'm blessed to see you and to be here with you tonight. I was very grateful this week when Dr. Graham a..., extended to me the invitation to come and to be in the pulpit this evening and so I'm thankful to get to do that and if you're here for the first time, no I'm not Jack Graham, I'm David McKinley and a..., I'm the teaching pastor here at Prestonwood and love having the opportunity to share this pulpit a..., as a..., as God has provided opportunity even tonight and I'm thankful for the opportunity to be with you. A..., not long ago, just a few weeks ago a..., my wife Connie, my daughter Lizzie and I were a..., doing a little bit of pre-college tour. She's a sophomore in high school and played sports every year, is always active during school year and so we always find it difficult to snag a week when we can get some time and can go and be on campuses while school is in session. And so we had a little break back in the spring and we made a trip and went several different places, but a part of that we spent some time in the car traveling and somewhere between East Tennessee and the border of Virginia we were flipping channels on the radio and we came across a song, a song that we started to listen to and then a song that we started laughing at and I had no idea who was singing the song or where it had come from I just knew that the song really connected with me. I thought maybe I'd share some of the lyrics of the song with you. It says this:

*Can't concentrate on the preacher's preaching,
My tention span done turned off.
I'm honed in on that angel singin,
Up there in the choir loft.*

Country music if you hadn't figured that out yet. [slight congregation laughter] Then it goes to the chorus:

*She's got her daddy's money, her mama's good looks,
More laughs than a stack of comic books.
A wild imagination, a college education,
Add it all up it's a deadly combination.
She's a good bass fisher, a dynamite kisser,
Country as a turnip green.*

*She's got her daddy's money, her mama's good looks,
And look who's lookin at me.*

*Her second cousin was my third grade teacher,
I used to cut her grandma's grass.
Back then she was nothing but knees and elbows,
Golly did she grow up fast.
Lord, if you got any miracles handy,
Maybe you could grant me one.
Just let me walk down the aisle and say, "I do!"
To that angel with the choir robe on.*

Heh, heh, well, that's an interesting little song isn't it? But, when I heard that song I was reminded of the fact there are a lot of things that can cause a disturbance at church. Right? There are a lot of things that can cause you to be distracted and one of the amazing things about church is you can go from one moment where you're caught up in glory of...of wonder in music and beauty and the next moment your mind's a thousand miles away. And of course when I saw this song which I later learned was sung by a group by the name of Ricochet, a..., I learned that...a..., I thought to myself that is such a...a lesson about life, about church, about faith, because one of the hardest things to do in life and in particular in the Christian life is to maintain a sense of focus. And tonight I want us to meet someone who caused a disturbance at church. It's not a lady, it's a man, he wasn't in the choir loft and he wasn't wearing a choir robe, in fact he was being carried to church on a pallet, but the story surrounding this man and what happened that day in the life and the ministry of Jesus Christ provides for us the backdrop of a message that I believe that is essential for us in our focus and in our faith in these days in the life of our ministry and in our walk with Jesus Christ. The passage of Scripture I'd invite you to join me in tonight is the gospel of Mark, chapter 2 and I wanna begin reading in Mark, chapter 2 and verse 1 and we're gonna read a portion of Scripture tonight that will help us to meet this man who caused a disturbance, this man who created a distraction, but we're ultimately going to learn something tonight about an incredible testimony of hope and as a transforming power of God. In fact we're gonna meet someone tonight who could have been the orphan, who could have been the stranger who could have been left outside, but God brought him in. Let's begin reading Mark, chapter 2 in verse 1:

¹*And again He...*

That is Jesus.

...entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

I love that phrase, Jesus was in the house, that's a powerful statement. That's what every church needs. Every church needs to be a place where it's evident that Jesus is in the house, cause if Jesus isn't in the house then we might as well not have church cause we're not gonna have church,

cause church is all about Jesus. All right that's not my sermon, that's just the start of it, okay? [congregation laughter] And it said:

²*Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He...*

Jesus!

...preached the word to them. ³Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

⁵When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

Then drop down to verse 12:

And immediately he rose, took up the bed and went out in the presence of them all, so they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

It was a day like no other day at church. Actually they weren't in a church, they were in a house, which most of the early churches were. There was a synagogue in Capernaum. When we go to Capernaum with our group traveling there in just a few weeks we will go to the ruins of that synagogue, but it's often believed that the home of the mother-in-law of Simon Peter was there in the city of Capernaum and Capernaum is a city that is on the northern most region of the Sea of Galilee. In fact I've got a little Bible map here for you to see tonight, because this map helps us to understand where we are in the ministry of Jesus. Of course you know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem just below Jerusalem and of course much of what happens that we are aware of in the life and the ministry and ultimately the passion week of Christ occurred in Jerusalem. But most of the ministry of Christ occurred in the northern most region up at Capernaum, up along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. And so it was in that place, in the hill country, very much like Austin. If you've been down around Austin and San Antonio, you know what the hill country's like, gentle rolling hills and some beautiful lakes down there, well that's very much what the northern region of...of Galilee looks like and there was this place called Capernaum. And so here we have the scene at the house. The scene at the house; Jesus is in the house and Jesus is in the house and people come to the house. And the Bible tells us that so many people come to the house in this scene that it is packed. There's not even any room around the door for anyone else to come in and so having set the stage in the scene; Jesus is preaching, Jesus is there, the people are there, but then there's a struggle...the struggle. And the struggle was something that started happening outside the house because a group of men had a friend and this man was a man who was a paralytic. We don't know if he a..., this day would be a quadriplegic, we don't know what the extent of the need was, what we know was that he had no ability to be mobile of his own accord and so four friends took a pallet, took as though it were a cot,

and they put the man on it and each one of them got on a corner and they took him to the house where Jesus was. They wanted to get their friend to Jesus, but when they got there because of the scene in the house there wasn't any way to get this man in. So now we have the limitations of a full house and the limitation of a man who can't walk, who can't maneuver, who can't find a way in. So what did they do? Well, they did something incredible and that was the solution at the house. The solution was simply this, they decided if they couldn't go in the doors and couldn't go in the windows there was still a roof on the house and of course many times in the ancient world they would go up on to the rooftop at night, it was sort of like a place they'd go sit out like a patio, but the roof was never a solid structure, it was thatched as though it were and so they were able to begin to remove some of the roof and opened a hole. Imagine now, we're sittin here in church right now, imagine all the sudden that debris starts falling from above. And all the sudden this man starts being let down through the roof right in the middle of the meeting. And Jesus is doing just what I'm doing, I don't know if He was standing or if He was sitting, but I know Jesus was preaching, He was teaching and in the midst of that this man starts coming in and the four men are up there letting their friend down through the roof. The man gets down in the presence of Jesus and Jesus simply uses the man and his life situation as an object lesson and right there He said:

"Son, your sins are forgiven!"

And the man got up picked up the pallet and he walked out the door. Can you imagine what that must have been like? Think about it, it would be incredible tonight if I could just heal somebody down here. Heh, wish I could! I can't, God can, I can't. But imagine that moment when Jesus touched that man and said get up and the man walked out. The Bible says the place came apart, literally the house came down. It was amazing what happened that day in the life and in the ministry of Jesus Christ. But all of that happened because of something that was going on in the hearts and in the lives of four men and to me one of the most fascinating parts of this entire story and one of the most impressive points for us to focus upon tonight is Mark, chapter 2 and verse 5, the Bible says:

When Jesus saw their faith,...

I want you to read that out loud with me. Would you read it with me?

When Jesus saw their faith,...

What faith is it talking about? The faith of those four men. Now certainly we could include in that there the faith of that man who let those four men, I mean it did take faith to let those four men let him down through the roof didn't it? But the Bible says when Jesus saw their faith that Jesus healed that man. Now, I know and you know that personal faith is essential. No one is ever saved, no one is ever changed, no one is ever spiritually healed apart from putting personal faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is an incredible...there's an incredible

illustration and I believe even an intimation in this passage of Scripture, that God moves and works in accordance with the faith of His people and when people are willing to believe that God can and will do something great then God uses those people and their faith, because faith is an essential and fundamental principle in living the Christian life. The thing that makes us great is not education, resource, ability, knowledge, location, anything else; the only thing that makes us great individually or corporately is that we are a people of faith and God honors faith. Why? Because faith honors God! Hebrews chapter 11 in verse 6 says this:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We live in an age of skepticism, we live in an age of casual faith where we're willing to sort of assimilate and...and sort of just accept different things as being a part of...of our knowledge and our beliefs, but not really stretching and trusting and believing. And yet the Bible tells us that God rewards people who diligently seek Him. He honors faith in the lives of believers and the wonderful thing about this man and this incredible healing is that while God indeed touched him and Jesus healed this man in his faith, Jesus blessed these men for their faith. These men saw their friend as a candidate of grace and they believed that they could just get their friend to Jesus that Jesus would change his life. And that's exactly what Jesus Christ wants us to see and understand, that the way that we bring the house down, the way that we become a people that are not limited, is that we have a limitless vision of what God can do through our lives is we will be willing to trust Him, to believe Him and to honor Him by faith. When I see these four men, I see the exact opposite of so much of what I see and what I hear in the church of Jesus Christ today. Far too often today in the church there's a lot of focus on self, my ministries, my Bible studies, my interests, my things, I find that the focus of faith today is on more creature comforts, a nicer car, a bigger home, more financial blessings and tragically ladies and gentlemen we live in an age where it has become common for the church to be self absorbed, self indulged and self focused and when that happens to a church, a church become limited, because it's all about us and the very thing that God wants in us is not to live for us, but to gain a vision that is limitless, a vision of life, a vision of faith, a vision of the transforming power of God that goes beyond the walls and gets the roof off the church and demonstrates to a watching world that Jesus Christ is Lord. And that's what God wants to do at Prestonwood and that's what God wants to do in His people everywhere. These are new days in our ministry, they're new days in our vision, they're new days of opportunity for us as a church. In ways like never before we are looking at horizons beyond anything that we've ever considered. When we came here and moved into this house and filled this house beginning in 1999, we couldn't ever imagine that this house wouldn't be everything that it needed to be, that the land, that the properties, that the buildings, the ministry would not ever be beyond it and yet by the grace of God, Jesus has been in this house and Jesus has filled the

house. But the question today is are we just gonna let the house be full and therefore the ministry be limited? Are we gonna be a people who are going to believe God and that He will reward those who diligently seek Him and are we gonna be a people who are gonna say "No" no limits Jesus! We want a limitless vision of what You can do and will do in our lives, through our lives, in this community, beyond this community for the glory of Jesus Christ. See that's *Bringing Down The House* and Jesus wants to bring down the house, but in order to do that He's gotta do a fresh work in our hearts, because that's what was happening here, something was going on in the hearts of these men. And I wanna share with you tonight what I believe was happening in their hearts and it's what I pray that God will do in my heart and in your heart as we share these words tonight. **HOW IS IT THAT WE'RE A PART OF LIFE AND MINISTRY THAT BRINGS DOWN THE HOUSE?**

Well, first and foremost when I look at these men and when I look at you and me I would have to say that **IT BEGINS WHEN WE DARE TO DO SOMETHING DIFFICULT**. Dare to do something difficult. If there's anything that I wanna communicate to you tonight it is simply this truth that being a believer is not simply coming and occupying your space on the weekend. Being a believer is being in this place in this space to be equipped to go out and to do something that may be difficult to do for God, but that God wants to do through your life and that God wants to do through my life if we are willing to believe Him and to focus our eyes on His power, His authority and His strength. In the world we live in today we're told that everything oughta be east. Everything is becoming more automated, everything in life is getting easier and while in many ways it's getting more complicated it's all supposed to keep getting easier. But can I go against that grain of thinking tonight to communicate to you that maybe, just maybe in the Christian life that is not the mine-set of what our faith is all about. Faith is not about just life getting easier for us, faith is about us daring to do something that may be difficult, but something that we want to do with all of our hearts for the glory of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And tonight the challenge of the message is the challenge to see in these men a heart, a desire, a passion to do something difficult, something demanding and I think this is especially important because we live in a day where the Christian life by in large had moved from concepts of militancy to kind of a gentle complacency. It used to be that we sang songs like:

*Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus going on before!*

But today we're afraid we're gonna offend somebody. Today we're afraid that people might not like us. Today we're afraid that...that we are...if we're too different from the culture that that's going to conflict with the culture so everybody just sorta wants to bring the temperature down and...and we just wanna chill and have a latte and talk about Jesus. Now I like lattes, but I want you to know that the Christian life is much more than that and the Christian life is being willing to do something difficult for God, to enter into a battlefield. Are we gonna live in a day, are we gonna live in an hour when we face militant terrorism and yet

we're going to believe that we can have complacent faith as Christians? There's only one solution to the terrorist issue in our world, do you know what it is? There is one solution, I can tell you right now what it is; it's called evangelism. The only thing that will change a militant terrorists heart is the love of Jesus Christ, bullets won't do it, armies won't do it, wars won't do it. Now, we need to do those things because of national security and the protection of our nation, but I want you to understand that we don't look at this war as a war that can be resolved in flesh and blood, because we're fighting against powers and principalities and therefore the strength of our battle is power in the name of Jesus. I love Winston Churchill, his character in...in history is one of the most fascinating to me, he was an incredible leader and yet you know as I know that Churchill led and Churchill was in power in a day of tremendous difficulty and frankly in days when there were great shadows. In the Second World War there was all likelihood that evil would reign and rule. But you know what Churchill said as he looked at his life and his legacy? This is what he said, he said:

"History will be kind to me because I intend to write it."

How do you like that?

"History will be kind to me because I intend to write it."

Ladies and gentlemen we need a generation of Christians who will say we want to write Christian history for the future, that we want to be a people of passion for God who were willing to dare to do something difficult in order that Jesus Christ may be glorified in us.

Oswald Chambers is a man who gave his life to do something difficult and many of you on a daily basis drink of the fountain, of his faith, of his life and of his sacrifice for Christ. He wrote a book, actually he didn't write it he...he did some lectures to a group of soldiers in World War I, in fact the latter part of his ministry was spent in Egypt living in tents, ministering to Australian and New Zealand soldiers, because he had been displaced from his home in London and from the school that he taught in there. And yet all of the devotions that he brought in those camps were taken by his wife and compiled and a devotional book was put together after his death was called *My Utmost For His Highest*. Do you know what Oswald Chambers said about his life and faith? Oswald Chambers said:

"My goal is God Himself, not joy or peace or even blessing, but Himself, my God."

What these men did, they did because they wanted to do something for the glory of God. These men did something, though it was difficult, and I gotta tell you it wasn't easy to carry you friend to the house. That was probably hard enough. I don't know if you've ever carried a child, I...listen...vivid memories, I lived in Central Florida when my kids were 1st thru 6th grade. We had annual passes to Disney World, loved it, but invariably we would go to Disney World on the afternoon, we'd have a great

day, it would get about 10, 11 o'clock at night, we'd watch the fireworks show, I'd be holdin one of the kids and guess what? They'd crash and then I'm at the back of the park and you know what I had to do? I had to carry that kid through that crowd all the way out of Disney World. I'm tellin you a child 2, 3 years old can become the heaviest object you've ever imagined. It's incredible when a child...when just that dead weight when they go to sleep. Well, here's a grown man, it's not a child and they're other men and they didn't have a car, you know, to drive him from one place to another, they had to go to his house, they had to get him, they had to get the pallet, they had to carry the pallet. Any of you have ever carried anything you know after a little while, I mean when you start it's easy, a piece of cake, pick it up and you start walkin, then you start thinkin I'm gettin tired, gettin a little more tired, whoo that's startin to hurt a little bit, you know, not in as good a shape as I thought I was in. You know all those things start happening. They carried the man, they got there and they couldn't get in. So they end up havin to carry him to the roof and ultimately havin to let him down through the roof. Physically it was a strain. Physically it was difficult, but it was nothing compared to the power and the strength of their heart because they wanted to believe that Jesus could change their friend. And I love the fact that they believed Jesus could do something, but that they did something to get their friend to Jesus. There's an old Quaker saying that says this:

"Pray and while you pray move your feet."

Heh, I think that's exactly what they were doing. They were praying, they were moving and they moved their friend to Jesus. Now, hear me tonight, I'm not saying that I just want you to do something that's hard on you. There are too many Christians who sorta get the idea that we just need to beat ourselves down, you know, that we just need to make ourselves feel bad. The purpose of this message tonight is not to make you feel bad and feel guilty. Now, if the Holy Spirit convicts you, I thank the Lord for that, because He's convicted me in the process of preparing it. I just want you to share some of my pain. But in the process, in the process I'm not saying to you that I want you to do something that's hard on you, but I am saying to you I want you to purpose in your heart to do something great for God, even if it requires much of you. Dare to do something difficult, that's why the house came down that day.

Second, **DECIDE TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT**. Decide to do something different. When these men arrived at the house they decided to do something that had never been done before. They didn't just simply go and say oh well, the building's full, we better go back or we'll wait our turn. No, they decided to do something different, as they saw it, it was urgent, it was important and the friend needed to get to Jesus and therefore they said the traditional way that you enter the house is either through the window or through the door and if we can't do it the way of traditionalism we're gonna do it some other way, we're gonna try the roof. And ladies and gentlemen, one of the things that changes us is when we begin to decide to do thing differently, not just doing what we've done, as we've done it because it's familiar to us and we're comfortable with

it, but that we begin to do something that may demand more of us, but something that is truly different. Now, I like to think of these guys as being a true gospel quartet. I mean think about it, there're four of them, they're together, they're kinda comin along, maybe they're singin, you know, I don't know, maybe they're singin a little song as they're comin down the road. But there was something about the harmony of their lives and of their spirit that made a difference in their friend. And what was it that came together to...to harmonize, **WHAT WAS IT** that came together to blend their lives so that they were able to do something different that changed the life of their friend.

Well one of the things was clearly that they had the quality, they had the high note of **COMPASSION**. There was compassion, there was a compassion of love and care and concern for their friend and that's where true ministry and true ministry impact begins, it begins in our hearts. We have to have a heart of compassion and I stand here tonight to confess to you that though I have studied the Bible seriously for many years of my life, I have to guard my heart against getting calloused and carnal and casual when it comes to the needs of other people. Being in ministry, being around need doesn't just automatically make you compassionate. It's Jesus that makes us compassionate, it's when Jesus has our hearts that we begin to become eyes that see the world as Jesus sees the world and one of the greatest prayers that we can pray on a daily basis is:

"Lord Jesus, love this world through me. Jesus, let my heart be Your heart, let my eyes be Your eyes, Lord, let my words be Your words. Lord Jesus, tenderize me through Your love and Lord, don't just make me a sympathetic person, make me a sensitive person to the movement and to the prompting of the Holy Spirit."

This man needed 3 things, 3 things that Jesus and Jesus alone could give him. He needed help, he needed healing and he needed hope. **HE NEEDED HELP**, he'd been in this condition, as best we know, all of his life, but his friends saw that he needed help and they believed that they could help him. **HE NEEDED HEALING**, now no one could heal this man's need except for Jesus and interestingly enough when Jesus healed him, he said:

"...your sins are forgiven."

Now I don't know all the background to that, as to why Jesus said that, except for the fact that Jesus, well we'll see in a minute, was demonstrating something that we all need to know and that is the truth that we are all sin sick. Sin has destroyed our minds, our hearts, our wills, it's made us twisted and incapacitated and limited to be the people that God wants us to be and only Jesus can remove the power and the destruction of sin. So the Bible says here that they saw this man and they saw his need for help and they saw his need for healing and they knew **HE NEEDED HOPE** and those are the things that are found in Jesus. You see when I have a heart of compassion that's how I treat people.

But not only was there compassion, there was **COOPERATION**. I love the fact

that these 4 guys did what they did together. Don't get the idea when I say decide to do something different, that I'm saying to all of you go out and strike your own match, just all go be a bunch of mavericks and just go do somethin wild for God. That's not what we're saying. You see there was a cooperation in this, it was a shared vision, it was something that they came together on, that they got together in their hearts on and they went out and did together in order that they might ultimately make a difference in the life of this man and true difference makers aren't just people who go out to do something of their own accord, they're people who go out and get others and do something together for Christ. There was compassion, there was cooperation...

And then, of course, there was **CREATIVITY**...creativity, I mean it took some creative thinking to say hey, there is another way, it's not the common way, it's not the expected way, but it's clearly a way. There's a lot of space between the roof and the floor and though there's no place near the door or the window all we gotta do is just get him down to Jesus in fact hey, we got a straight shot to Jesus from the top. That was creative and so on one corner you've got compassion that maybe got the whole thing goin. On another corner you got cooperation who knew how to help get everything together. On the other corner you got creativity.

And then in the end you got **COST**, you got somebody who said, you know what we'll pay the price. Have you thought about that who fixed the roof that day? Who fixed the roof? We don't know, but I can tell you this, there were 4 men at that roof, 4 men in that place who came together and did something different and because they were willing to do something different they did something dynamic.

John Maxwell the wonderful teacher and speaker on the subject of leadership has often made this statement and I love it, he said:

"If we do what we've always done we'll get what we've always got."

I don't know of any principle that is of greater truth and application to the church then that principle today and I simply say to you this is not a day when we can just be content doing little things, making little strides, we need to see a massive movement of God, but it's gonna be because God begins to do something different in us, different in compassion, different in cooperation, different in creativity, different in cost, but when we decide to do something different it begins to be something dynamic.

Well, that brings me to the last part, to the last phase of what happened and that was not only that they dared to do something difficult and decided to do something different, but I want you to understand that beginning in verse 6 that they had to **DETERMINE NOT TO ALLOW SOMEONE TO DETER THEM**. You see when ever you ~~decide to do something difficult or dare to do something difficult~~, decide to do something different you're gonna have someone say hu...hu, you're gonna have someone criticize and in this case the Bible says that here in the midst of this moment, such an

incredibly, glorious moment in the life of this man there were a group of people sitting there who well, let's just see what they said beginning in verse 6:

⁶And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason these things in your heart? ⁹Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk?'"

Then listen to this:

¹⁰"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹"I say to you rise, take up your bed, go to your house."

Did Jesus ever claim to be God? Yes, here is a prime example, only God can forgive sins and Jesus Christ looked at the man and said:

"...your sins are forgiven."

Were the scribes and the Pharisees offended that Jesus declared that He had the power to forgive sins? Yes, and today there's still a dispute over the authority and the authenticity of Jesus Christ. This is the debate of the world in which we live today. People shame us, people mock us, people resist us and say that Christian message is a bunch of baloney, but just as in that day so it is in this day, there's power in the name of Jesus and if we believe in the authority of Jesus Christ and if we stand on the testimony of the Word of God we can look at people and tell them there is forgiveness, there is freedom, there is power in the name of Jesus and Jesus will change their lives, but let me assure you, there will be people all around us both inside the church and outside the church who are going to resist, who are going to oppose and who are ultimately going to criticize. [pause] They were sitting with the people. I pray tonight that there are not any among us who have come only to criticize, but I pray that if there's criticism in your heart that Jesus would help you to see His power and his grace. You see in a very real sense we can all identify with one of **4 GROUPS** at this little gathering there at the house in Capernaum.

Of course one of the groups we can all identify with is the **CROWD**. The crowd, they were there, they were there to hear Jesus, they were there to hear the Word of God, they were there to experience this moment and there are crowds that gather and I thank God for the crowd. But if the crowd is only there to sit then can I be candid enough to tell you that the crowd gets in the way and one of the things that we've gotta be very careful about as the church is that we are not simply a crowd, a crowd where we talk about Jesus, but a crowd that makes it difficult to get people on the outside to the inside to be able to hear the truth about Jesus. It's great to be a part of the crowd, even more that that to part of the family of

God, but we've gotta be more than a crowd, we've gotta be truly a congregation of believers who are committed to the great commission of Jesus Christ to get lost people into a saving knowledge and relationship with Christ through the power of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. So I pray that if you're a part of the crowd that you'll be more than a part of the crowd.

Then there are the **CRITICS**, that's who we were just talking about, the critical, the people who are there to criticize. We've been criticized as a church. The more that we do, the larger we become, the greater the impact we have in this community, I can promise you, we are going to be criticized and not only we in the cooperate sense, you and me in the personal sense, because of the common identity that we have, both in this congregation and in our common commitment to Jesus Christ. I love the wise words of Ruth Graham who once said:

"Just pray for a tough hide and a tender heart."

You know that's what we need is a generation of Christians to have a tough hide and a tender heart. We don't ever need to quit being tender. We've got that hearts full of love for Christ and people, but we've gotta be tough and resilient and to realize that there are going to be criticisms all around.

There's another group of people you can identify with and that's not only the crowd and the critical, but the **CONCERNED**. The concerned were those 4 men, the concerned were those who were in active duty, busy doing the work of the kingdom and while we do not know the names of any of these men, I promise you there was not one person that left that home that day who would ever forget the look on their faces, when they looked up and saw those 4 faces looking down at them. What an incredible moment. What it must have been when they looked up and realized, look at these guys. Can you imagine the smiles on their faces? The concern in their heart was now experiencing the power of Christ and the healing of their friend. What a moment it was and I wonder tonight are you a part of the concerned?

Or may tonight you're like this **CRIPPLED** man, maybe tonight you're just like that song we sang earlier. You feel like your outside, you feel like you're a stranger, you wonder if there's a way that you can get help, if you can experience healing and if you can get hope. Well, I want you to know that all of those are available in Jesus and Jesus is in this house tonight, He's here in the presence of the Word of God and the testimony of fellow believers and tonight I want you to know that the power of Jesus Christ that healed the paralytic in a house in Capernaum years ago is the same power that is here spiritually to heal your heart, to mend your brokenness and to change your life. It was Eugene O'Neil who said:

"Man is born broken, he lives by mending and the grace of God is the glue."

God's grace is available to you tonight and it doesn't matter who you are,

where you're from, what happened in your life, what kind of brokenness you've experienced, I want you to know tonight that God's grace is a glue that can take your life in the fragments, the pieces and the limitations and He can put your life together, but it all begins with a moment of faith, a moment of saying Lord here I am, a moment of abandonment, just like this man who had to abandon himself to be let down by his friends into the building. Maybe a friend brought you tonight praying for you that you would know Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can and will change and mend the brokenness of your life. Max Lecado is an incredible author and Max has often painted beautiful pictures of the power of Christ and of the love of Christ, but one of the great statements that Max has made in his life writings of this statement:

"God loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way."

Do you see that in this passage tonight? God loves you just like you are. But He loves you too much just to leave you that way. Jesus loved this man when he came down as a paralytic, but He loved him too much to leave him that way. Jesus looked at him and said:

"...your sins are forgiven."

And the man was healed and he was made whole and he walked out and he lived a different life. You see Jesus transforms those who come to Him by faith. That's why every time someone's baptized we say:

"Buried with Christ in baptism unto death..."

Do you know what the rest of it is? Can you say it with me?

"...Raised to walk in newness of life."

In a very real sense every person is changed in their walk when they know Jesus. Jesus Christ will change your life tonight if only you'll open your heart and receive Him. Jesus Christ will take your life as a believer tonight and if you're willing to dare to do something difficult and decide to do something different and are willing to stand even though there may be those who will speak against you, Jesus Christ can do something new with you, but you gotta quit sitting, you gotta quit being a crowd and you gotta start being a Christian who will walk with Christ and follow Him day after day.