

## **It's all about friends**

### **Sermon on Mark 2: 1-5+11+12a**

(Tim Bach, Felix Uduokhai, Caspar Simon, Paul Milburn, Christine Erb-Kanzleiter)

The readings today are all about friendship and healing. They were chosen by the confirmation class children. Ruth and Naomi – great friends, God knowing us better than we know ourselves, a woman being healed by Jesus, and a man who can rely on his friends...

This sermon was put together in a workshop with me by Tim Bach, Felix Uduokhai, Caspar Simon & Paul Milburn.  
Paul and I will share in the presentation of it.

And Caspar will read the Bible text to us.

#### ***Jesus Heals a Lame Man***

***When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.***

***So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.***

***Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.***

***And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.***

***When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, «Son, your sins are forgiven....stand up, take your mat and go to your home.»***

***And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out.***

It is all about friends.

One is paralysed. And the other four help.

Lots of people have come together. They all seem to know that Jesus is coming. He is staying in a place which the text calls "home".

It must be the house of very good friends, where he often stays when he is in town.

The town is Capernaum.

It is the place where Peter comes from, where Peter's family lives, where Peter's mother-in-law was healed. Maybe it is their house.

Our story is full of people. Packed. Overflowing...

People everywhere: and nobody can walk through the door into the house anymore. No chance to get in for the four friends and their paralysed companion. They do the crazy thing. They open a roof...

And: they never talk in the whole story.

Why do they not ask their friend whether he wants to be taken to Jesus? Why do they not discuss alternative solutions when they cannot get into the house?

Was what these people did to help their friend part of a long-term plan? Or was their action a spontaneous idea?

Had they known that Jesus would come?

Who had the idea to take the paralysed man to Jesus?  
Did the man who could not walk, persuade his friends to take him? Or did the friends, or one of the friends, urge the disabled man to try and seek the help of this man who worked miracles?

Jesus is the only one in the story who speaks.  
And without being asked he immediately knows what is expected of him.  
He does it.  
We don't know whether Jesus heals by touching, or only by talking.  
When that man is let down through the roof and placed in front of his feet, Jesus reacts without discussion or questions. Somebody had just dismantled the roof, ripped off tiles or boards, and Jesus only seems to see the need of the disabled man. He shows no surprise about the unusual access to an overcrowded house, no anger..., no attempt to stop them do what they were doing. No.

The four friends had surely not intended to damage the house. If they had planned the whole thing, they were of course expecting to carry their friend through the door. Only when the place was so packed and the way through to Jesus blocked, had they to come up with plan B. They had to be creative and imaginative. Careful, too, of course. They had to be courageous, strong, fearless, and determined.

The need of their friend outweighed the question whether what they did was okay and accepted. They just did it. Did the unusual. There was no way of holding them back. They had to help their friend!  
Maybe they were so brave because there were the four of them!? Not one alone... They must have known that when they all helped together, they would be able to make a life-changing difference to this friend who they must have loved a lot. Everything and everybody in this story is full of hope: the disabled man, his four friends, the whole story... Hope against all hopelessness.

Those friends had worked really hard. They were selfless...  
They gave what they had, tried what they could, took the risk, did not look at the cost, nor fear the reaction of the others.  
We know that not everybody liked what Jesus did. We assume that not everybody liked what the friends did.  
Others had stood in line, and this guy just comes through the roof. What if everybody did that? Others had waited in vain and were not let in, this guy ignores all rules, takes a little detour and is instantly healed...  
By what he did and how he reacted, Jesus stood at the side of this man and his friends. He encourages their creativity and courage and opens a new life to all of them!

Take your mat and go home, Jesus says to the paralysed man. Was the man surprised? Thrilled? Shocked? Was he just so overjoyed and happy?  
We don't know.  
As he could walk again, he could join his friends in doing so many things that he had not been able to do for years... maybe for all his life...  
Jesus had healed him, encouraged him, inspired and enabled him!

Jesus had sent him back into everyday life with a healed body and a heart full of happiness and joy.

Those five friends must have been overwhelmed, because in a way they were all given a new life... a new life together. Healing does not only affect an individual. It has an impact on the whole community.

It is a shame when some cannot rejoice. And it is a great chance for all those present to rethink their own lives, change their thinking and become open to giving, helping and receiving. Because this is just what had been done in the story.

It is so important to have friends. Really good friends!

It is such a blessing to have people who help and people who allow others to help them.

Both are necessary to form a community!

We cannot all always and only be helpers.

And we cannot all always and only be in need of help. Life would never work like that.

Helping must be a mutual giving and taking. That is what friendship is all about.

That is what Jesus blesses by healing the one who could not walk. And this blessing spills over onto the entire community.

They can now all help and be helped.

It is part of being human that we don't always know how best to help. Sometimes we expect too much. Sometimes we hold back in the wrong moments. Sometimes we may find it really hard to allow others to help us.

We know how hard it can be to admit to our own weakness.

In a way it is so much easier to be helpful than to allow others help us.

It is never easy to find the right balance between giving and receiving. We all can give and receive. We all have to give and allow others to give to us.

We all need help, support, and encouragement.

And we all can help, and support, and encourage others.

Life is both: to give and to receive.

And for sure the people of Capernaum knew by the end of that special day that life is all about friendship: help and be helped and use the wonderful ideas and talents we are given.

Amen.