

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

July 25, 2021

Lesson 8

Love Your Neighbor. Really.

Mark 2:1-12

Okay. Let's deal with the roof problem. These friends of the paralytic made an opening in the roof of somebody's house so they could get their sick friend to Jesus. Healing and forgiveness are what Jesus did, so that part is not surprising. What is surprising is the disregard for the property of the house.

I'd like to think that these four friends went back later and repaired the roof. It was probably some kind of flat covering, maybe just dried mud. Noted New Testament scholar Vincent Taylor used almost a full page to talk about the roof. He used Greek words more than a dozen times and quoted others in Latin and French. (Oh, yes, he was writing in English.) Bottom line: we don't know. Leastways, I don't!

The neighborliness in this story is that these friends did what they needed to do in order to get the paralyzed man to Jesus. Maybe that is the bottom line of being a true neighbor: getting others to Jesus. Look at Matthew 25:35-40. When you feed the hungry, you have brought them to Jesus. When you show welcome to the outsider, you have brought them to Jesus. When you work at the church clothing closet, you have brought others to Jesus. When you reach out to others even in the prison of their brokenness, you have brought them to Jesus.

Jesus gave this man physical and spiritual healing (Mark 2:5, 11). You'd think the crowd would have burst into applause. At first, some of the scribes, the legal experts, challenged Jesus' authority to forgive sins. He settled the question of his authority by setting the man free of his paralysis. Then, the crowd did start giving Jesus high fives (a rough translation of Mark 2:12).

Question: What does it take to convince me that Jesus can heal and forgive? Answer: the grace of God. I will know that I have recognized Jesus' power (authority) when I see that I am a good neighbor, helping others to be in touch with the love of Jesus. There may be a few roofs in the way, but I know what a true neighbor does.

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "You have the authority, Jesus, so now I name before you those whom I bring to you."

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