

Mark 2:1-5

After a few days, Jesus went back to Capernaum, and people heard that he was at home. 2 So many gathered that there was no longer space, not even near the door. Jesus was speaking the word to them. 3 Some people arrived, and four of them were bringing to him a man who was paralyzed. 4 They couldn't carry him through the crowd, so they tore off part of the roof above where Jesus was. When they had made an opening, they lowered the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven!"

"Raise the Roof With our Gratitude and Praise"

Rev. Leanne B. Thompson

September 19, 2021

Who here remembers something called a *trust fall*? The trust fall was a fixture of my youth, and even young adult years. It was popular as a youth group and retreat activity and it was part of my camp experience as both a camper and as a counselor.

There were many variations on this theme but the way it worked was this: one brave individual would volunteer to be the one to fall; everyone else would commit to catching the individual. It might be at ground level, or within a close circle of bodies, or off a platform. The trusting individual would cross their hands over their chest and...fall.

Now, I know that in this exercise the one who falls is supposed to be the example of the one who is faithful, the one is depending on their teammates to catch them, modeling what it's like to depend on, have trust in God. But if you have ever stood on the receiving end of that fall, then you know something about trust, too. I can remember standing on the ground shoulder to shoulder in two parallel lines with my arms stretched out and interwoven with the arms of the group member across from me, watching the back of the individual standing on the raised platform preparing to fall thinking: *what if we are not enough?* And having this moment of even greater terror thinking: *what if everyone else suddenly moves out of the way, and I am left standing here alone, and I am not enough?* But everyone *doesn't* scatter, and we *are* enough. Because the truth of the matter is demonstrated in that exercise: we are enough; together, we are enough to catch the person who is falling.

A man in today's story was healed. Like so many before him, in the presence of Jesus, his infirmity of body and spirit was removed. But he didn't get there himself. He couldn't get there himself. His friends carried him, and when they couldn't get in the house to get near Jesus, they went to extreme lengths to get their friend in front of him. They were determined. So determined they carried him up to the roof where they made a hole to lower him down right in front of Jesus.

They had some serious faith. They believed *so* completely that Jesus would heal their friend that they wouldn't let anything stop them from getting them there. And here is where the story gets interesting and deviates from most of the other healing stories.

When Jesus saw *their* faith he said to the paralytic "Child, your sins are forgiven."

Not *your* faith, *their* faith.

Here is the truth at the heart of stewardship and why I didn't want to miss the opportunity to tell this story: Stewardship is about *our* faith in Jesus and the power it has to save, rescue, and care for others. The paralytic was not healed because of his faith; he was healed because of the faith of his friends.

Today in our worship, we are practicing the power of our faith to offer comfort, healing, and blessing to those who we bring before Jesus because of our faith: