

Rev. Janet R. Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
6th Sunday after Epiphany  
Sunday, February 16, 2025  
Scripture: Luke 5: 17-26  
Sermon: Teamwork

Watching Super Bowl 59 on Sunday was exciting. Even if you aren't a football fan during the season, it is hard not to watch the Super Bowl and root for one of the teams. This year the Eagles made it to the Super Bowl and they won the game 40 to 22 against the Kansas City Chiefs. Kansas City had won the Super Bowl two years in a row and many thought that this would be year three but it wasn't to be.

The Eagles worked as a team all season to get to the Super Bowl and they worked as a team to win the game on Sunday. A football team doesn't win because of one player, they win because they are working together to accomplish the goal. Everyone has to participate on the team and all the coaches have to do their job as well. Coaches are part of the team as they help the players on the field to get a new strategy and to encourage the players to keep going in the midst of trials and difficulties. They all have to have the faith and determination to do their best and try their hardest. It takes teamwork.

Life is better when you have a team. You don't feel as alone. You have each other to lean on and be there for each other. It is great to have a team you can work with and trust.

I think it must be that way for this paralyzed man and his friends in our scripture lesson today.

These faithful friends come to the house where Jesus was preaching. They were focused on bringing their friend, who could not walk or use crutches to Jesus. They hadn't come for themselves; they came so their friend could be healed and walk again. They had heard about the healings of Jesus, and they wanted to help their friend. These friends worked as a team. These men carried their friend for miles and wanted what they thought was best for their friend. They worked as a team to get their friend to be in the presence of Jesus even though the building was completely full

of people wanting to be healed and wanting to hear what Jesus had to say.

There were no hospitals, no MRIs, no primary care physician and no treatments for this paralyzed man. Being healed by Jesus was his one and only hope. He needed a miracle.

These friends are hot and sweaty from having carried a grown man from wherever they came from. They are tired, and they have finally reached their destination, only to find no room. Imagine their desperation upon arriving and finding no room. If there were as many people as is implied by the numbers and locations that these people came from to see Jesus, then they couldn't even see Jesus through a door or window. They couldn't even push their way in!

This is actually the second story of "no room" in the Gospels, isn't it? "And there was no room in the inn..." Jesus was denied room... and here's a man denied room to see Jesus. But this man has friends, and they will work as a team.

The friends trusted Jesus would heal their friend if only they could get him to Jesus. And they are perfectly willing to rip open the roof of someone else's house and drop him in. It is a bold, desperate act, but Jesus often commends those who act boldly, who meet their own desperate situations with faith in action and trusting God and friends to be there.

I'm sure we could apply the story of these friends to our lives and our church: how we need each other during difficult times and to have the body of Christ in our life; to be a team together so we don't feel like we are facing life alone. We shouldn't let the structures in place in architecture, tradition or apathy or excuses get in the way of helping each other and bringing people to meet Jesus. What about our circle of friends? Are we the kinds of friends who are willing to go the extra mile? Do we have the kind of friends who see us needing help and are willing to be by our side?

I've seen people struggle with their faith, thinking they're the only ones dealing with work, family, church, God, and the thoughts in their head. We are all on the same team, God's team and our church community is full of people that I believe would carry someone to see Jesus. So many people in this world need to meet Jesus. So many in our world need good faithful friends and family that help them when they need it the most. What a difference Jesus makes in our lives when we come to him. How might our

ministry here at Elmer change if we invite people to come and meet Jesus? How might our lives change if we support others and encourage others to be in the presence of Jesus?

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). That’s Jesus. That’s what he preached and that’s what he did.

Jesus saw a kindred spirit in those friends, who let down their paralyzed friend into the middle of the room from the roof. He understood putting yourself aside to show love, to be a friend. That resonated with him. And it’s what he wants from us.

Are you ready to rip the roof off? Are you ready to boldly put your friends, family, and neighbors before Jesus so that they might be forgiven and healed? Are you ready to be forgiven yourself?

Jesus saw the faith of the friends and responded with healing and the big surprise in the story, with forgiveness.

But the question is this, what was it about their faith that made Jesus wish to heal and forgive the man? What aspect of their faith does Jesus approve of: was it a faith that believed the teachings of Jesus, or that they trusted him as someone who wouldn’t turn them away, or that they believed he had the power to heal? Was theirs a faith that decided there was nowhere else to go, and so, risked it all right here or was it that Jesus saw in their actions proof of true faith? The kind of faith that brought them to selfless good works: a faith that caused them to show mercy to another person, to act with kindness and without thought for themselves. The man is healed because Jesus saw the humble strength of their faith.

Suddenly Jesus offered him forgiveness. How strange, this word, out of nowhere, “Your sins are forgiven.” Is Jesus making a point for the sake of the Pharisees present? That is the obvious answer, a declaration that at once asserts his authority and makes the religious officials very uncomfortable.

The friends of the paralytic were disappointed they didn’t get the miracle they’d come for, the Scribes and Pharisees on the scene were furious that Jesus was bold enough to grant forgiveness of sins. That is God’s prerogative alone. Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus asks the important question: “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”

Obviously, it is easier to say “your sins are forgiven” precisely because it is non-verifiable. It is, in one sense, an invisible reality. So, Jesus demonstrates his authority to forgive sins by telling this man to “get up and walk.” And the man does so “in front of them” (Luke 5:25). The crowds were “amazed” and praised God.

In this Jesus demonstrates his authority and his priorities both of which come from his divine identity as the Son of God. It was a great opportunity to show those present that day the power of God and that Jesus had this authority from God.

What assurance do we have that our sins are forgiven?

What can we all point to as the reason that Jesus’ death was an effective payment for the penalty of sin?

Verse 25 tells us what happened to the man next, “Immediately, he stood up.” The word there for our English, “stood-up” is the same Greek word for “rise up”, from which we get “resurrection”. The word “resurrection” literally means “to stand up to rise up”.

The demonstration of God’s power and forgiveness for sins is the ‘standing-up’ again of Jesus from the dead.

The verifiable demonstration of God’s power and pardon for sins is the resurrection; the “standing-up” again of Jesus from the dead.

This is the center of Luke’s message in his written accounts. Jesus is the resurrected Saviour and Lord of the world. The assurance of our forgiveness of sins is the standing-up again of Jesus from the grave. It is in him we place our faith and confidence of new life.

The story of Jesus forgiving and healing the paralytic is incredible and worth retelling but it also points forward to the greater proof that our sins are forgiven because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We all find ourselves on a pallet some days, and we need Jesus’ liberating command, “Rise, take up your pallet and walk”. Or, perhaps we need Jesus’ first words to the man: “Your sins are forgiven.” Forgiveness is what we all deeply need. For “long ago” sins or last week’s mess ups. Guilt or shame can paralyze our spirits and put us on a cot.

God wants us “fully alive” to be able to live with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to “stand up and walk” and it begins with forgiveness and forgiveness brings healing.

Who do you know that needs this amazing Jesus?

To what extent are we willing to go to bring them to Jesus?

What do I really believe Jesus can do? Let's work together to bring others to experience the love, and forgiveness of Jesus.

Remember it takes teamwork. Working together with God amazing things can happen. Don't just be a spectator but be part of the team working for God.