

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
February 18, 2018

Their Faith
Mark 2:1-12

2:1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

2:2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.

2:3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

2:4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.

2:5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

2:6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,

2:7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

2:8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts?"

2:9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?

2:10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the paralytic--

2:11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

2:12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Once while Jesus was teaching people at a home, there was a

rumbling sound on the roof and made dusts fall down. Then the sunshine streamed down through the hole on the roof, after all some people slowly suspended a paralytic confined to his bed.

At Jesus' time, in Judea, the roofs of houses were made of wood beams like a bridge on the wall of sun-dried bricks, and leaves above the roofs acted as an umbrella. Usually every house had stairs to the roof beside the wall, so it was easy to go up to the roof. Well now, however, it was very unusual to take away the roof of others' house and suspend person. I would say it is not right just ask healing without listening the words of God. However, Jesus accepted and gave them the forgiveness of sins and healing since He realized the faith of them. Why? What thing of their faith touched Jesus? Let's think about it together.

1. Love and Kindness

First of all, I think they had love and kindness for others. Faith is always with love. Faith is simply to accept God's love and love God. Faith without love is only the knowledge and not truthful. In the Bible, Galatians 5:6, it says, "Only faith working through love is valuable." So, if you believe in God's love you can love others and kindly behave.

"They" mean the paralytic and the people having compassion to him in today's verse. The paralytic couldn't have seen Jesus himself and lost his chance to be healed when Jesus healed many other patients. Then people tried to bring him to Jesus for his recovery. It is the best work of love to bring people to Jesus.

When my wife and I came to California, one American lady called

us to help Japanese lady, named Yuriko, because she was dying for a cancer and needed to hear the Gospel. We visited her a few times and she had faith in Christ. She passed away later, but the person caring Yuriko stayed with her at the time. She was just a neighbor of Yuriko, but she hoped the salvation of a Japanese and worked for love to bring her to Jesus.

Later on, other American Christian asked us visit a Japanese lady in a hospital. My wife sang softly hymn by her pillow, and I read the Bible, spoke her Gospel and prayed together. Not everyone with us believed in Christ, but many of them believed in Him before they passed away.

One time, one of the church members talked to us, saying, “I have a friend. Her name is Tsuyako. She was cancer and is in a hospice program at home. I tried a few times to talk about Jesus, but she is kind of stubborn.” Then we went to her home, and saw what she meant. She was very stubborn. My wife listened to her very patiently. She listened to her sufferings and her painful mind. Even though such “stubborn” lady confessed her faith and got baptized before she passed away.

Like all these, we spoke about Jesus Christ in hospitals, hospices, and care homes in California. We could reach the people since many American and Japanese Christians worked for love and prayed for them. They prayed for our work and supported us very passionately. Jesus want to find Christians who seek others’ salvation and work for them, not for their benefits. Like the paralytic of today’s verse, some people cannot come to churches. It is very beautiful when you love them and spoke for their salvation in hospitals, care homes and even

prisons. Jesus rejoiced “their faith,” in today’s verse, because “they” loved and kindly worked for the paralytic to bring him to Jesus.

2. Overcoming Obstructions

Secondly, the reason why Jesus well pleased “their faith” was that they tried to overcome the obstructions.

They brought the paralytic but they could not enter the house because there were so many people in the entrance, as verse 4 says, “And when they could not get near him because of the crowd.” Every time I read this verse, I am wondering what hindered people from going to Jesus. What do you think? Have you ever think about the obstructions that prevent you go to Jesus?

What does prevent you from going to Jesus? It is ultimately your sins. Specifically, “Sin of not admitting your sins” People who believe in Jesus come to Jesus because they know “I am a sinful person and that is why I need a savior” This includes tax collectors like Matthew and Zacchaeus, Peter who was Jesus’ best disciple but denied him, Paul who persecuted many Christians, and the “prodigal son” and the “tax collector” in His parables. The sins hidden in our depths keep us away from holy God but at the same time, we can come close to God when we admit our sins, seek the forgiveness and purification from sins, and pray for repent of our sins. When we do these, we can hear the word of gospels. — “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:17) “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

There are so many things that keep us away from God other than sin. One of them is “crowd” as appeared in today’s verse. This

paralytic could not go to Jesus because of the crowd. In today's world, a crowd could be obstruction for us to see Jesus. In the gospels, this "crowd" is not used in a good way. When Jesus became popular, the "crowd" followed Jesus. When Jesus gave bread to five thousand people, the "crowd" tried to make him a "king" and use his power for Judea's independence. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, a "crowd" praised Jesus shouting, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Son of David!" But the same "crowd" screamed "put him on the cross" when Pilate, a Roman governor, judged Jesus. The "crowd" is described as an irresponsible and uncontrollable people in the gospels.

There are many people thinking, "If I become a Christian, it is going to be problem when I go back to Japan." For those people, "Japanese Society" or "crowd" is obstruction of their faith. When we seek for the salvation, the "crowd" say "you don't need to do it so hard" or "just do it moderately" (There is a joke for Japanese people. When we are frustrated by someone, we say "my leg is stretched by someone." The length of Japanese people's leg is getting longer because Japanese people try to stretch the legs each other.) We tend to listen to the voice of "crowd" instead of the Word of God, and this is why we give up faith. However, if you really seek the salvation, you shall find the way to overcome the troubles and obstructions.

Those who brought the paralytic did not give up when they were disturbed by "crowd." They thought that they could use the roof instead of the door, and carried out the idea. It was unprecedented way. Sometimes people do unprecedented things for something called "faith" but this is absolutely wrong. The Bible does not tell that you can do whatever you want for your goal. However, giving up when

you face obstructions is not the faith. Jesus accepted “their faith” because they did not give up, working hard and overcame the obstructions.

3. Trust and Obey

Thirdly, Jesus pleased “their faith” because they had confidence that Jesus would heal the paralytic. Faith means not only to believe that God can do this, but also to believe that God will do this. We can easily conclude that God can do this from that God is almighty. But we cannot conclude that God will do this only from the knowledge about God. God can heal sicknesses, but it belongs to God’s sovereignty when and whom God will heal. We cannot force our own plan on God. However, God answers to who are asking, opens the door who are knocking, and is found by who are seeking. He will answer the prayers of those who know His will and ask with confidence. They — the paralytic and the people who brought him to Jesus — believed that Jesus had the healing power, but also believed that Jesus would heal the paralytic, and they put their faith into action.

Jesus answered to their faith and said, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” This was not a forgiveness to the action that the paralytic came to Jesus from the broken roof and interrupted his teaching. And Jesus did not just announce God’s forgiveness by saying, “God forgave your sins.” His words showed that Jesus was the Son of God and had authority on earth to forgive sins. His words introduced the argument with the scribes, but Jesus wanted to show him and the people that true salvation was not in the healing, but in the forgiveness of sins through the healing of the the paralytic.

Hear the healing of sickness was an evidence of the forgiveness of sins. The healing that Jesus did was deeply connected to the forgiveness of sins. Mark wrote about the healing of sickness in Mark 1:32-43. Matthew also wrote the same account in Matthew 8:14-17. Matthew added a verse, saying, “This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.’” (Matthew 8:17) The miracle of healing is different from other miracles. For example, in the case of casting demons, Jesus just worked by his power. However, in the case of healing, Jesus took people’s illness and bore their diseases with his body. It is the same as the forgiveness of sins. Jesus took our sins, became a sinner, died on the cross, and forgave our sins. His disciples, people, and the scribes did not understand the forgiveness of sins by the cross was hidden in his healing ministry. But the disciples were taught this truth by Jesus himself after his resurrection. It is why they could write the truth in their Gospels.

Jesus said to the man who was healed, “Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” The word, “rise” means to stand up physically, but also stand before God as a forgiven person. Before we returned to God, we stayed in our sinful status, and even enjoy it. When people live a certain condition in a long time, the condition becomes our comfortable zone even they should not stay there. Most people keep staying there even God invites them to the new and better place. Jesus never allow us slumber in our comfortable bed. He commands us “Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” He says us, “You are no more sick person. Go back home and do your duty that you couldn’t do during your sickness.” To be saved is to live for the mission God gave

you. people keep staying their comfortable zone. were staying our sinful status. The man followed the command of Jesus. He began to live in the right relationship with God by the healing and forgiveness Jesus gave him. Those who trust in Jesus ought to obey him without hesitation. Jesus saw “trusting and obeying” in “their faith,” and answered them.

When Jesus see us, what does see among us? Does he see the love we pray for others’ salvation and reaching our hands to them? Does he see the eagerness to come to Jesus getting over obstacles or difficulties. Does he see the faith to ask the pardon of sins and live in the forgiveness which Jesus earned by baring our sins.

(Prayer)

Heavenly Father, You want to see the faith working through love, overcoming the obstructions, and obeying You. Give us such faith by the grace of Christ and through the help of the Holy Spirit. Hep us to raise from comfortable zone and begin to follow Christ. In Lord Jesus’ name, Amen.