

## **“Determination: Better Together”**

Mark 2:1-12 – Tesa Hauser

Vista La Mesa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), La Mesa, California – March 7, 2021

*Holy God bless the speaking and the hearing of these words so that we can remember why we are gathered here today. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

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Have you ever helped a friend move before? Moving, in general, is exhausting, but helping a friend move can be even more tiresome. Then the time comes to move the couch, which is usually large and hard to handle. For some reason, this happens at the end of the day, when you are the most tired and just want to get home and relax. Also, there are stairs involved, and couches aren't typically stair friendly. But it is the end of the day, and you are determined to get the couch up the stairs and through the front door. Working together, you manage through heavy lifting and weird angles to finally get it up the stairs and through the door. Thank God for good friends.

That is what I think of when I hear this story in Mark. Much happens within this healing story; you have the four determined friends and the blasphemous forgiveness of Jesus. I love how this story is written. For the author of Mark, it mattered that this story included these four friends and them tearing through the roof to see Jesus. The story here in Mark could have just read that four men brought a paralytic man to Jesus who was preaching in a crowded home. Once they

finally got to Jesus, he forgave his sins, to which the Pharisees took issue, and the rest of the story continues as it does

The determination of these friends is encouraging, astonishing, but also foolish. We aren't sure who owns this house and if they gave permission or consent to these men to tear his roof off. I'm going to assume that the answer is probably not, though there is a small chance that it was okay. However, you can feel the sense of urgency and the importance of having their friend see Jesus. When Jesus sees them, he responds by acknowledging their faith and their determination. He does not reprimand the friends for tearing the roof; the property damage did not matter versus the need to see Jesus. How many people may have missed the moment thinking about the roof? How many people would have judged the friends for their actions instead of seeing the love they had and their faith in Jesus to heal them?

If you think about the details of this story further, it is a precarious situation. The friends have to create a hole in the roof, and with four people, that may have made it a little easier. However, they then have to be careful not to fall through the hole. Are you with me? Then they have to carry their friend up to the roof. Most homes had stairs going up to the roof, but these stairs do not have rails or guards, and their friend is on a makeshift gurney made out of wood. I imagine people saw

them lowering him down and got up to help, but the whole situation sounds exhausting. Their faith made them determined to have their friend see Jesus.

This plan had to be settled upon by each person, it may not have worked if one friend decided this was a good idea, but the rest said never mind. Even if three had said yes, they were better together. Each one made it more manageable to tear through the roof, carry their friend, and eventually lower their friend down to see Jesus. There are things in life that should not be done alone, going through an illness and recovery, losing a loved one, rejoicing in a new job or a new family member, or being on the journey towards a healthier mind. I would say that a pandemic is one of them when most, if not all of us, haven't gone through a pandemic before. It is a unique experience we are all going through together. Thankfully, our faith has brought us into the family of God, and that faith is what gives us the strength and courage to do hard things and bold things in general and for one another.

This story is ultimately about the authority of Jesus, which is given to him by God. However, no one expected Jesus to offer forgiveness. The way a miracle story happens is that the person in need of healing meets Jesus, and then they are healed or provided with the instructions, not that their sins are forgiven! The paralytic man and his friends believed that what was wrong is that he needed physical healing, but what Jesus saw was a man in need of spiritual healing, which

Jesus gives freely without prior confessions or any known faith of his own. It's amazing how Jesus can see us for who we are and know what we need. Jesus can see the truth when we can't. Are the things we see as wrong with us the actual problem? In this story, forgiveness is healing; that is enough. Jesus cares about the body, and so do this man's friends who are willing to care for him to the point of radical action. However, others could heal during this time, but only God can forgive sins – the God who cares about us holistically, wholly. Jesus ultimately physically heals the man, but only to show that he does have the authority to forgive sins, at which the people are amazed.

So how did we get here? By the faith and determination of four friends and their actions. Now, I'm not encouraging foolish behavior during a pandemic, but I am encouraging us to realize that we cannot endure without one another. The finish line is close, and the race against coronavirus will end. Let us be determined to continue uplifting and caring for one another from afar until we can return to pre-pandemic times together. We are the church brought together by God and our faith. Our faith will help us continue to do the hard work, and when we do it together, the unexpected can happen.