

# Dirty Hands

## *The Richest Man in the Room*

April 28, 2024

***We're gonna' look at the story of a man who meets Jesus, and goes from nothing to everything!***



One minute he's a beggar and the next he's the richest man in the room. But before we get to that, answer this question: **Who's willing to get their hands dirty for you?** Because none of this would've happened without that guy's four faithful friends who cared enough to carry him when no one else would. You see,



When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that He had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and He preached the Word to them. Some men came, bringing to Him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven... I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' ... He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!' – Mark 2:1-12 NIV



In first-century Rome, if a baby was born paralyzed, or with any abnormality, they didn't have much of a future; they were often abandoned by their family and left for dead and the Jews didn't think much of those who were "different" either. Even the disciples ask Jesus, since that guy over there was born blind:



"Who sinned, this man or his parents?" – John 9:2 NIV

The paralyzed, the abnormal, the blind, and the sick were kept at a distance from "regular life" – in a courtyard, in the temple, that served as a barrier between the so called, *normal* and *abnormal*; y'know, those who were blessed by God and those who weren't.

**So, the paralyzed man in our story is perceived by others as a mistake.**

He has to beg for a living. He's got no job, no influence, and there's no mention of any family. On paper, he's got nothing to offer. So, it's a big deal for him to find anyone who would've cared about him or be seen with him, let alone physically touch him. These guys risk their reputation and do something unheard of and socially unacceptable. They grab their paralyzed buddy and crash the party, literally. And interrupted Jesus by lowering this broken guy into the center of the action.

Thankfully God uses four godly men who aren't afraid of social rules or religious expectations when it gets in the way of God's business! Because **a true friend is willing to carry your mat** because **a true friend is willing to get their hands dirty**.

And as great as that is, maybe the better question is, **whose mat are you carrying?** Jesus says you need to do these two things more than any other things in your life:

"Love the Lord Your God ... and love your neighbor" – Matthew 22:37-39 NIV

Telling someone you love them is simple, just costs you a few words and maybe a smile. But **carrying someone on their mat is a little more costly**, isn't it? It comes pretty natural to look out for ourselves and go about our merry way. We don't have to work at that, do we? But we do have to work hard just to see others, let alone do something about what we see. But:

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. – Philippians 2:4 NIV



I mean, for me, serving others is what gets me out of bed in the morning. It's a big part of what and how God created us! I can't imagine how empty life would be if it was just all about me, looking out for me. Which is why we need frequent reminders to carry each other's mats:



Don't forget to bear one another's burdens – Galatians 6:2. NIV

And y'know when it's time to bear one another's burdens? When God tells us! That's when. **God's in charge of the result; we just need to be obedient.**

Imagine how vulnerable this paralyzed man felt being paraded through town. "Would you look at that...poor guy, he's so messed up he has to have people haul him around. Glad I'm not that guy." It's one thing to be over in the corner begging, it's another to be carried to a roof-top and lowered into a crowd of people. But the only thing that separated his life from anyone else's is some severed nerves. His legs didn't work; okay, that was his thing. That's what made him different, but **everybody has a mat**. A mat can be pain or brokenness. Maybe your mat is fear, anxiety, or depression. Maybe your mat is worrying about what other people think about you; maybe your mat is what you do at night when no one is looking. Maybe your mat is the guilt and shame you still carry from that one decision, long ago.

Several years ago, after some fruitful, but difficult ministry stuff, I started calling myself the "pastor of disaster" (seriously). It was during this same season, I was talking with another pastor, and I actually said, "After these last few years, there is nothing I can't handle!" I mean, who says that and expects to get away with it? Apparently, a guy in need of some humbling, that's who! "There is nothing I can't handle", came out of my mouth. And worse yet, it came from right here (my heart). Do yourself a favor, do everybody in your life that cares about you, a favor, and don't ever say that. Unless you are in need of some humbling...then go ahead!



Well, we know God is always listening. And a few months later what followed was the deepest, darkest season of wrestling I've ever experienced. The Lord started stripping away all the pride I didn't even realize I was carrying by dismantling my identity as the super pastor of disaster.

For months there was pain, confusion, and even the occasional tears. Until one day I was sitting by myself and deep in my heart I heard God's quiet, still voice ask, **"Am I enough?"** And during this painful season I had friends far and wide (and *God even sent complete strangers*) to carry me on my mat all the way to the feet of JESUS. Because the reality is, **sometimes we carry our friends; sometimes our friends carry us.** Like Bruce, and others, like to say around here "the church is just a field hospital where the less wounded help the more wounded, and then they trade spots."

It is only when we allow others to *see* us on our mat, and then help *carry* our mat, that we can move towards healing! I mean, if we claim to know Jesus, and we are not willing to carry each other's mats, what are we doing here?



"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,'; **[good luck]** but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." – James 2:15-17 NIV

**I don't see much evidence that Jesus ever rushed past those in need.** He had a mission all the way to the cross; he was on a timeline, there was a countdown, but He always stopped and cared for those the rest of the world overlooked. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly how these four men came to know this paralyzed man or if they even knew this man at all. But, what we do know is that there was a real relationship because these four men took time out of their lives, got their noses out of their phones, and after looking this man in the eyes, **they did something about what they saw.** And don't forget we're all on the same mission.

And like Jesus **we can't rush past others as we rush through life.** I think Jesus would say, **"If you know Me, and love Me, you can't help but act like Me."**

Whatever you did for the least of these...you did for Me. – Matthew 25:40 NIV

As these men carried their friend to Jesus you can imagine their conversation: "I heard this Jesus guy is the real deal. I heard He can do the impossible! Maybe He could do it one more time... that would be amazing; all we have to do is get this guy there in one piece."

But all their excitement changed to "Now what?" when they got to the house. The crowd had gotten so large there was no room, so in football terms these four guys call an audible; they head to the roof, do some remodeling, and give the host home a new skylight.

The question for you is, **are you that desperate to get to Jesus?**

I was in the parking lot of Costco before it opened one day, and it was people hastily parking at all angles, jumping out of vehicles, frantically grabbing reusable shopping bags, and running to be the first in line... all to get their hands on a roasted chicken. These four friends of the paralytic were that sort of *desperate* for Jesus ... I love those roasted chickens btw.

What if we were that excited about worshipping Jesus here on Sunday? Parking at all angles, jumping out of our vehicles, running to be the first in line. Like the men who cut a hole in the roof and lowered their friend down, **meeting Jesus doesn't happen by accident.**

### **Are we willing to do whatever it takes?**

When these four men poked their heads through the hole in the roof and lowered the man down, "Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

Yep, they did it. They got this guy to the place where Jesus could say, **"You are broken, you are imperfect, but faith has washed you clean."** And not only that, Jesus gives him new legs. "Get up, take your mat and go home". So, he stands up and does just that.

And just like that, this man, who has spent his life begging – who everybody has marginalized and ignored – meets Jesus and immediately goes from *nothing* to *everything*. In a matter of minutes, he became the richest man in the room. Cause' when you have friends, when you have Jesus you have everything.

In the same way, before we know Jesus, we come to Him broken, with nothing. And there's nothing we need to do to earn His love. He loves us no matter our condition; even if we see ourselves as a mistake, in the corner, lying on our own mat.

This morning, your mat might feel hopeless, you might feel like God doesn't care or others don't see you. Well, take a look around; you have us... people to help carry you on your mat.

Or maybe this morning the Lord's asking you to be on the lookout *for* the broken. Maybe God is asking you to be faithful and courageous enough to grab someone and help carry them all the way to His feet.

**Because, we all need friends like the four guys in our story.**

**And we all need to be friends like these guys.**

Carrying someone on their mat might mean breaking some social norms. It might mean breaking the religious expectations of others. It might mean being uncomfortable, or tearing a hole in someone's roof, or whatever it takes.

But let's be people who are desperate to do whatever it takes to bring people to Jesus.

**So, get out there and get your hands dirty!**