Own the Vision, Part 4

Always Reaching Out

(Luke 5:17-20)

We’re continuing in part four of our series “Own the vision” and we’ve been considering the values of our church. We began several weeks ago, talking about playing it safe, about faith, we talked about serving in week number two, and in week number three we talked about generosity, because we truly believe that it’s more blessed to give than to receive. Now today, we’re going to talk about always reaching out, because God gave us a job to do, very literally he sent us into all the world to preach the good news of Jesus’ love and grace. And so, for you and I, right here, right now, we want to be always reaching out to people who are far from God.

Today, we’re going to look at Luke chapter 5, but before we go there if you’re following along in your Bible, turn to Matthew’s Gospel. We’re going to look at Matthew chapter 9 and I want to give you a little bit of context before we read it. What had happened was that Jesus just healed a paralytic. The man had gotten up off of his mat and walked home. As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. Now Matthew, a tax collector, had quite a reputation as a sinner and to the shock of all the religious people, Jesus called out to him and said, “Follow me.” Now Matthew was elated, he was overjoyed at having been called by Jesus. He was so excited that he invited Jesus to his house to join him with all of his friends to celebrate. Now remember, Matthew had a reputation as a sinful man, and so when he throws this party and invites his friends, they were obviously some very questionable characters. And so, Matthew tells us, “When the Pharisees (these were the religious guys, when they) saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” (Matthew 9:11). Verse 12 says,

“On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:12-13).

This passage is foundational for the message today, because we need to recognize that Jesus didn’t come for the righteous, but sinners. He didn’t come for the healthy, but for the sick, and when he saw Matthew, a tax collector who was despised among the Jews; when he saw him, he saw beyond the questionable business practices, and he saw a man who could make a difference in this world for the kingdom of God. When Jesus called Matthew to be his follower, to be his disciple; it was because he saw something in Matthew that no one else could see.

I believe that Jesus saw something totally and completely different. I believe he saw a guy just like many of us who probably made some bad decisions early on in life and found himself trapped in a pattern of sinful living. Jesus looked at Matthew and saw a guy who was searching for truth; he’s seeking God, he’s trying, but he’s not quite there. And so, Jesus can see the spiritual battle going on inside of the tax collector, that he’s being drawn toward what’s right, but he is being held back by what’s wrong. And this is so important for us to understand, because Jesus didn’t come for those who have it all together. He came for the sick, the hurting, the broken, and the burdened. He came for sinners and today if you’re hurting, broken, and burdened I’m believing that this could be a day of breakthrough for you like never before.

We’ve been talking about owning the vision of this church. This is important, because when we started this church, we understood that God had spoken and had called it to be a hospital. And we remember Jesus calling of Matthew; that he came not for the healthy, but the sick; not the righteous, but the sinners. And it’s for that reason that we want every week to be a good week to bring someone to church. That’s why every week we share the good news about Jesus. That’s why every time the church is open, every service we want to present the gospel, because we believe that God is calling us to reach people who are far from him and lead them to become followers of Jesus.

And so, that’s what we’re going to talk about today, always reaching out, always going to great lengths to reach people with the gospel. This morning, we’re going to look at a story about four guys in Luke’s gospel, chapter 5, and I’m just going to read it and then we’ll break it down. Verse 17 tells us,

“One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 5:17-20).

In these few short verses, we find two separate dramas unfolding. One is that Jesus was inside of this house and the building was packed with people. Luke tells us that this was like a Bible conference, the religious people, the Pharisees and teachers of the law had come from every village of Galilee, from Judea and from Jerusalem. And so, the people had pushed their way inside, they’d lined up against the walls, they pressed in to get a glimpse, to hear a word, to get close enough to this man who’d been performing such great miracles and speaking such wonderful truths.

On the other hand, outside a whole separate drama was unfolding as a group of five friends approached the house only to find the house jammed full of people and even spilling out onto the street. As they approached the crowd they could clearly see that there was no way that they’d be able to carry their friend, the fifth man in the group, in to see Jesus. You see, their friend couldn’t walk. He was a paralytic, and so he was carried on a mat. There was no way they’d be able to get through the crowd of people already pushing and straining to force themselves into every last square inch of space the house had to offer. There was just no possible way to fit in four men plus one more carried on a stretcher.

Again, on the inside of the house there was the crush of the crowd which was mesmerized by the promise of miracles. There was excitement in the air as all those bodies were pressed together and people were straining to see Jesus. But on the outside, the urgency and the frustration of these four men must’ve overwhelmed them; this man Jesus had been observed actually healing people; they’d tried to get there as quickly as they could, if only they could get their friend to Jesus. Luke tells us,

“When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus” (Luke 5:19).

Now of course, that’s a rather simple explanation, but somehow these four men managed to get through the crowd, pushing, pulling, until they were able to climb to the roof of the building with their friend on the pallet. Then in desperation, they began to dig and claw their way through the material of the roof. You could just imagine on the inside, the banging, the creaking, and groaning as dirt and dust was falling from the ceiling. Until suddenly the people on the inside were temporarily blinded by the light shining through this hole in the roof and somehow these four men were able to lower this man, their friend on the pallet, down into the house, right in front of Jesus.

Now I wonder, how many of you could honestly say that you’d go to such extremes to bring somebody to Jesus?

Well today we’re talking about “Always Reaching Out” and I want you to notice that before Jesus heals this man, he addresses the most important thing first, his spiritual need, and he forgives his sins. You see, that’s the priority and therefore, we need to be purposeful, even radical as we reach out to people who don’t know Jesus. And so, what I want to do for the rest of our time together is to give you two big ideas that all of us who are Jesus followers are called to do in order to love people into a relationship with Jesus.

## 1. Caring for Others

The first thing that God calls us to is: caring for others. And many times, just like those four men, caring for others requires us to bear some burdens. You see, we don’t have to go to the inner-city, we don’t have to go to a foreign country, because we’ve been called to care for those who are hurting and in need around us. Now, many people are called by God to go into missions, into foreign lands, but we may see our mission field every day. Some of them are right here. Some of them live in your house. Others are in your neighborhood. But the world is full of people who are hurting, alone, and in need. And so, it’s up to you and me to make a difference.

The Bible emphasizes this truth again and again: when you have the opportunity, the power, or the ability to step in and help someone, you have a responsibility to do it. The apostle John tells us in his first letter to the church,

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:16-17)

James asks in chapter 2, verse 15,

“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," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? (James 2:15-16)

The apostle Paul talked about this very same thing in Galatians chapter 6. In verse 2 he says,

“Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

In verse 10 he says,

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10).

And so, the Bible tells us that as a believer, as a Christian, you’re going to have to carry some burdens, you’re going to have to care for others, and we see a good example of this in Luke chapter 5. But it’s actually all through the four Gospels and maybe you’ve noticed without considering how many times people come to Jesus on behalf of someone else. Maybe because their daughter, their son, their brother, their friend, or even their mother-in-law needs to be healed. There are just so many examples where people come to Jesus on behalf of someone else.

I believe if you want to see God’s power at work in your life this is a good place to start. As followers of Jesus, we’re going to have to bear some burdens just like these four guys carried their friend to Jesus. And in the same way, we’re not just going to invite people to church, we’re going to bring them to church. You see, there’s a big difference between inviting someone to come to church and “I’ll pick you up at 10.” We’re literally bringing people to Jesus just like these four guys do.

I believe with all of my heart that most people don’t care how much you know, but they want to know how much you care. There are people all around us that are hurting and we need to be there for them. When they’re crying, we’re crying with them. When there celebrating a birthday or whatever, we’re there just like the Bible says in Romans chapter 12,

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn…” (Romans 12:15).

You see, when there’s a need we help to bear the burden. We don’t just drive by and shout, “Jesus loves you” but we care about people and we show them his love before we tell them about his love. And so, the second thing that God is calling us to do is to make a way.

## 2. Making A Way

Now I don’t know exactly how that’s going to be realized in your life, but when you have understanding of this, you’re going to see people who are hurting, people who need you to listen, people that need help on the side of the road, maybe even people you don’t like, but suddenly you’re going to discover that they’re actually going through hell and you can love them into a better place. And so, you’re going to have to make a way, maybe doing what’s never been done, but you do whatever it takes to get people to Jesus, because we have to get people to Jesus.

In Luke chapter 5, these four guys are willing to do whatever it takes, they break some rules, because they know they’ve got to get their friend to Jesus. Look with me again at Luke chapter 5, verse 18,

“Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. “When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus” (Luke 5:18-19).

Now don’t miss this, because of the crowd they couldn’t get to Jesus, but they were desperate enough and seeing their friend healed was the only thing that mattered to them. They weren’t going to allow their circumstances or a difficult situation stop them. They knew that they needed to seize this moment, because the next time may never come. And in the same way, we must be committed to always reaching out, always reaching people, taking advantage of every moment, because the next time may never come.

Like these four guys, we need to make a way. We need to be desperate as a church to reach lost people. I pray that the story of these four guys, carrying the burden of their friend to Jesus, would stir you to break through, to do whatever it takes to get your friends to Jesus. Because we just can’t wait until next time, but what we can do is allow our hearts to be broken with what matters to God. You see, we can be concerned about the roof being messed up or we can keep our eyes on what really matters most to God. You see, when we have a church full of people that are desperate, that are crazy like this, that are aggressively bringing people to Jesus we’re going to change our community and change the world.

When you and I recognize that Jesus didn’t come for the healthy, but that he came for the sick; when we recognize who Jesus is and what he’s done for us our only reasonable response is to give him our lives. And so, I’m asking you, would you “Own the Vision” of this church, would you make a way, no longer playing it safe, but serving, giving, and reaching out as the light of the world. I’m praying for a church full of people who would bear some burdens, who care, and are willing to make a way; getting involved in the lives of people; doing whatever it takes to get people to Jesus; because we know what it means to be sick, we know what it means to be healed, and we know what it is to be forgiven by the grace of God. When you know that, you’ll do anything to reach people for Jesus, because God is calling us to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

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