

Sermon on the healing of the paralytic

Faith is a Funny thing.

Introduction.

There had been a severe drought, and the members of a rural congregation were deeply concerned that their crops would be ruined.

One Sunday, therefore, the minister said to his congregation, "Brothers and sisters, I understand your deep concern about the harvest. There is nothing that will save us, except a special service of prayer for rain. The Lord promises that if we pray in FAITH, He will hear us. So go to your homes now, fast for a week, and pray. Then, next Sunday, we shall hold a service to claim the Lord's promise because I just know it will rain next week at this same time!"

The people fasted during the week, and then returned to church the following Sunday morning. But as soon as the minister saw them, he was indignant. "Go away!" he shouted. "How can you expect to claim the Lord's promise if you have no FAITH?"

"But Reverend," they protested, "we fasted and prayed, and we have come believing that the Lord will be true to His word."

"Believing?" exclaimed the minister. "Believing?! Then where in the world are your UMBRELLAS?"

I love this story. It is one of my favourites. Jesus went to Capernaum, & when they heard about His miracles, great throngs of people started crowding around him, filling the house where He was staying, blocking the doorway, listening to every word that Jesus said.

Then it tells us that 4 men got their friend who was paralyzed & lying on a pallet, & brought him to where Jesus was teaching. The first 5 verses of the 2nd chapter tell us about the faith of these men. And we need to notice what faith does. Faith does 3 things in these 5 verses.

1. ***Faith is never discouraged by the difficult.***

- Have you noticed that? Faith is never discouraged by the difficult.

STORY

- Have you ever tried to carry someone for a long distance, even if you are only carrying one of 4 corners? I don't know how big this guy was, but if he was only an average sized man, to carry him through the winding streets of Capernaum would have been a difficult task.

They must have assumed that once they got there that they would just walk right in to the presence of Jesus. But when they arrive they discover that the doorway is blocked & the house is so packed that there is no way for them to get their friend to Jesus.

So what did they do? Did they give up? No, not at all. They tried another approach. They carried him up onto the roof. If you thought it was tough carrying him on the street, you ought to try carrying him up the stairs. Here they are, struggling up the stairs until finally they get up on top of the roof.

Carolyn's story is one of sticking with it despite constant years of difficulty

APPLICATION

- PRINCIPLE OF STICKING AT IT
- Not letting time wear your faith down.
- That you never know when God is going to Act
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2, faith is willing to do the unorthodox.

A] I like that. Faith does not stay in a rut. The usual way to enter a house is through a door, never through the roof. But that was the only way to get to Jesus, & so as unorthodox as it was, that is what they did.

B] Gods Mixed Economy

This comes from Church leaders thinking about how we connect with the unchurched or those lapsed church goers. So in the economy of any Church programme there is a well used, well honed, well honoured tradition that is important and needs to be maintained. The traditional Service at 11.30 on a Sunday morning but mixed in with that is fresh ways of doing church.

This phrase doing church, what does it mean? To me it is those occasions when people come together and thoughts about God – all of God- is brought to people's attention then that is Church. So when the BB has their Bible Class among their activity is that church- YES. When Youth club have a certain spot with their activity, is that Church, absolutely.

The Person collected for Luncheon Club, is that doing church? Yes Yes.

I think we need to keep reminding ourselves that church happens 7 days a week, and break away from the idea that getting people to church on a Sunday is the only day we do church.

Back to this mixed economy. Yes we have tried and tested expressions of church but we then try, under God's guidance, Fresh Expressions of Church.

One example is Messy Church. This is when we bring people together not on a Sunday and it is not just for "Our People" but for all around us.

Illustration of Messy Church.

Below is a Blog of someone who visited A Messy Church experiment.

Messy Church is not about your existing church and children. It is about new people coming in to church that doesn't happen on Sunday morning. You might need your existing children and parents to kick-start it but ideally it is about getting new folk to come to church and finding out that it needn't be stuffy and regimented like it may be on Sunday mornings with tutting when kids make a noise. St P's are doing it monthly on a Saturday afternoon.

We began with a welcome in the hall (paying £1) and the kids ran off to paint on the graffiti wall, or play giant floor Ludo, or make a train set up, or draw and stencil. There was juice and healthy snacks too (and hot stuff for grown-ups). The hall was partitioned off so this all happened in one third. Parents were joining in or chatting to one another. The theme was Harvest. After a while we got into 2 teams and played a game, and then had to guess how far some fruit had travelled. (Our team won!) Then someone told us a story about food miles.

Then we all moved to the other part of the hall where the Crafts were. There were a few stations that children could choose: making pics from seeds, beans etc; making fruit and veg with readyrolled icing; making flans with custard, toffee sauce and fruit; and fishing with a magnet. All the time the Harvest theme popped up. Children moved around at will and had a go at everything.

After about an hour we all moved through to church for some quiet time. First we had a song and then Rev Stewart sat us all in a circle on the floor and asked the kids what they'd enjoyed most. Lots of highlights. Then he told us a story in style and then we had some chill out time with more music and a prayer.

Other examples can be found at www.messychurch.org

C] WAS THAT CHURCH- YES and it was on a Saturday not Sunday.

It is very like the Family fun day and the Kids Party that was part of There's More to me.

What about Seymour Street

- Was the pub quiz church-
- Laser skirmishing church-
- Ladies craft night and Salsa dancing church YES. YES YES.

If ever we had a confidence IN OUR God to try Messy Church it is now.

APPL. A church that is stuck in a rut, a church which sits around saying, "We've never done it that way before," or, "We tried it once & it didn't work," will never succeed in its God-given tasks unless it dares to try something different once in a while. And the example of these men teaches us that faith will always continue trying.

GODS MIXED ECONOMY.

3. faith will pay the price.

A] THE Story Every time I read this story I sympathize with the homeowner. I can just see him sitting there watching all the debris falling down, wondering to himself, "Who is going to pay for all this?"

Undoubtedly, those men on the roof were willing. It costs something to repair roofs, but faith & love are never discouraged by what it costs. They know that if you're going to do something worthwhile that it will cost something.

B] Believing in God is no picnic.

- At times it can be difficult and cost us.
- IT DID COST Jesus to make it possible
- Are we willing to pay the price, in terms of service and sacrifice and change and letting go?

B] Sometimes in church we hang and hang with something that has had its day, and maybe there are times when we need to hold our hands up and say, it's done, it's had its day.

Not that any of Seymour Streets groups are weak, all are strong and healthy.

CONCLUSIONS.

Carolyn's Story has revealed to us God's power, and if there are any doubting Thomas's among us please take time to ask the question why you find the story so hard to believe or comprehend. Her Story does leave questions of Why have I not been healed, or why then and not before. If anyone is thinking these ways I would appreciate the opportunity to chat soon.

We have witnessed a miracle in our time and in our place.

Where is your faith- in what- in whom?

And how can we take our renewed Confidence in God and as a church move forward, Can Messy Church be a new form for us.