

Mark 2 v 1-12 I read this story from Mark about 2 weeks ago and it just spoke to me so please allow me to share a few short thoughts with you.

I would like you to imagine a time when Corona virus didn't exist ..safe social distancing wasn't required (apart for me avoiding those hugs)Now imagine St Georges on a sunny day, full of people - over flowing out the door (yes it does happen occasionally) – the church absolutely full and buzzing.

Jesus has come for a visit to St Georges. He is going to speak. Jesus is standing in the aisle of the church just before the service starts and he is chatting to a lot of people who have gathered around him. People are also talking with their friends, busy running around getting photocopying done, welcoming, getting a news sheet, practising the music, putting flowers out, preparing for Junior Church – and people, of course, wanting to talk to Jesus –

A crippled man is on a stretcher being carried down Long Chaulden to church by some friends - but they can't get in – the car parks are full, the church is rammed and far too busy. The friends have heard that Jesus performs miracles and is a great teacher. They know Jesus can help their friend.

So to get around the problem they strap him to a stretcher - like one of those the mountain rescue people use. Then they get some strong chaps - to carefully pass the cripple up onto the roof at the side of the church, up the two levels via some ladders until they are standing on the roof.

Then they dig a hole in the roof - Peter Malan and the BMC would have a fit - “we only had the roof repaired last year at great expense” - but then the guys get some long rope and let the cripple down to where Jesus is - of course everybody stares in disbelief - firstly at the hole in the roof, then at the stretcher being lowered and eventually everyone sees the man on top of the stretcher.

Then Jesus speaks – “Hi Son, Your Sins are forgiven”

And soon after the kerfuffle has died down Jesus says – “is it easier to forgive or make the man whole again? “take up your bed, go home” - and a miracle happens the man gets up – picks up the stretcher and goes home. A modern-day version of the Story we read together from Mark

Characters in the Drama: Which part one do you identify with?

Firstly - The Cripple, the one who needs Christ for forgiveness and healing

Secondly - The Cripple's friends who are committed to bringing him to Jesus,

Perhaps you are Critics – who are more worried about bring the church into dis-repute, the hole in the roof, the mess - rather than seeing someone healed and restored.

Then there is The Crowd – some there ready to listen to Jesus, Some running around making the service ready, some just there for Coffee and Biscuits and a friendly chat.

and lastly there is Jesus – the one who is able to heal and forgive.

What Do We Learn from this?

1) Jesus is the hope of the world. Ready to heal – ready to forgive and love

- 2) There are people in need who are lost, lonely, desperate to know their sins forgiven, some need our Lord's healing touch.
- 3) Bringing people to Jesus is difficult. We can't just tie them to a stretcher, clamber up the side of the church and lower them down...it is still difficult at the best of time – even more so with social distancing. But as a team we can bring the lost to Christ.

At the moment we can't meet in the church - which is very sad - we do miss you guys so it's great to meet online and see your faces... **but we can still bring people to Jesus**. We need to be doing the work of Jesus - helping the lame, comforting the lonely, feeding the poor, giving living water to the thirsty and showing love to those living next door.

Practically : We can act, look after our neighbour by helping get shopping, going to the chemist (keeping a safe distance), Calling a friend on the phone, writing a letter, posting a card, giving to the foodbank – donating our wealth, our spare time and energy, We can be the hands of Jesus helping those around us who might be alone, in need of comfort and in need of love.

Mentally: helping people, breaking down the loneliness of isolation by allowing them to talk – and staying positive ourselves. Watch the way we speak and behave - Encouraging - rather than moaning. Being grateful for what we have – rather than being disappointed in what we don't have. Being careful of what we post on facebook and social media. Lifting up, Bearing up and Encouraging like Barnabus in the book of Acts.

Spiritually: we can still bring people to God in prayer – in your individual prayers or in joint prayer – speak to God about your family and friends, your colleagues, those isolated and vulnerable.

If you haven't heard we have a **what's app prayer room** – I have to say I find it encouraging as a church when we are lifting each other up in prayer. Email/message Linda, Penny, Sharon or myself and we send add you to the group.

God is calling us as a church, calling you as an individual to bring people to Christ, this week guys, this week, now is the time to be a Christian in all senses of the word, being a good neighbour, a good Samaritan and being a prayer warrior.

By God's loving grace you will see that - People will be healed, people will not be alone, and people will know God's forgiveness and be transformed

– **St Georges** – my prayer is that you will all be making a way for people to come to JesusAmen

Let's Pray – Father God, in these uncertain times we pray that you will help us be the Good Samaritan, helping us go the extra mile with our neighbour, helping us listen, act and care. Send your spirit on our church Lord to help us wherever we are to trust you for the future and to share your Love and Peace with those around us.....and Lord heal our world. Amen

Peace be with you.