



**“Doing What is Necessary”*

Biblical Text: Luke 5:17-25

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In last week’s text Jesus was in Church. *Luke 4:16 tells us, it was his custom. He went to synagogue regularly, according to *Luke 2:48 since childhood. But he spent far more time hanging out with ordinary people than he ever did in the temple.

So do we. When you add up time spent at *ball games, at work, with family, it’s true. It’s even true for me and I work at Church. (I’m just saying! So I know it’s true for you!)

He went to synagogue, but he spent time with people. *He came to Church to remember the mission. But his mission field wasn’t inside the walls of the temple. It was out with people.

But that’s not how we usually see the mission of the Church. Most churches, including United Methodist Churches, have a mission statement something like: **“Making non-religious and nominally religious people into deeply committed Christians.”*¹

There is much I admire in that. The problem is that’s not really how Jesus did it. One of my mentors, Methodist scholar, David Lowes Watson, puts it this way: **“The job of the Church is not to get the sinners in; it’s to get the Christians out.”*²

As I read about and study the life of Jesus, he wasn’t all that interested in the religious life of non-religious people. He didn’t invite them to come and fill the *pews of the temple, although he was regular in his attendance. He didn’t ask for a donation or contribution though he *admired one who gave sacrificially.

¹ Mission Statement at various campuses of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.

² 1992 lecture at Drew University and in *God Does Not Foreclose: The Universal Promise of Salvation*, © 1990, Abingdon Press.

Jesus just didn't seem all that interested in turning non-religious people into deeply religious people. ***But he was very interested in them!** He was interested in their hurts and hopes, and interested in their lives. He was interested in them.

So, what if following Jesus today isn't primarily about religion at all? What if what Jesus had in mind for us was more basic?

Do you remember how he expressed the great commandments for those who follow him? ***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and mind and soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself."** (Matthew 22:37-28, Mark 12:30-31)

The likelihood that people who not connected to religion will walk in here on Sunday is not too high. It is possible. We did!

But the likelihood that people will respond to the followers of Jesus, when we are genuinely interested in loving them as God does, in what matters to them – their hope and dreams, their hurts and struggles? Well, that's always been high.

Jesus had only two primary ministries, sharing the Good News of God's love and forgiveness, and healing the hurts of many. As he said in Luke 4:43: ***"I was sent for this purpose."**³

***In our text today, Jesus is in Capernaum. And Luke 5. Verse 17 says: **(Jesus) was teaching, with the Pharisees and teachers of the law nearby; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.*"**⁴ So, both ministries are visible, teaching and healing.

And verse 18 says: ***"Some men were carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him before Jesus."**⁵ But there was no way they could get to Jesus due to the crowds!

³ Op. Cit., Luke 4:43, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

⁴ Luke 5:17, adapted from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1989. Used by permission.

⁵ Ibid. Luke 5:18..

So, verse 19 says: **“They let him down with his bed through the roof tiles into the crowd right in front of Jesus.”*⁶

Verse 20: **“When (Jesus) saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”*⁷ Notice whose faith Jesus affirms. It was the faith of his friends. Imagine friends that love you so much!

Verse 21 **“The Pharisees said, “No one can forgive sins but God alone!”*⁸ Jesus answered, verse 23: **“Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk?’”*⁹

And in verse 24: **“Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go home.”*¹⁰ And verse 25 tells us that, **“Immediately he stood up before them, took what he was lying on, and went home, glorifying God.”*¹¹

As Christians we are called to love people enough to befriend them, be interested in them, and bring the love of Jesus to them. **We are called share His ministry with them.**

In a recent commentary on this passage we find this question: **“Who are the people who would pick you up, tear off the roof, and bring you to Jesus? We all need friends like that.”*¹²

That’s a great question. I hope you and I are always looking for ways to bring our friends and neighbors to this community of faith where we are all about loving God and loving people.

An even more important question is this one I ask every day: **“Who do I, who do we, care enough about that we are willing to bring Jesus to them?”* (Will you pray with me?)

⁶ Ibid. Luke 5:19..

⁷ Ibid. Luke 5:20.

⁸ Ibid. Luke 5:21.

⁹ Ibid. Luke 5:23..

¹⁰ Ibid. Luke 5:24.

¹¹ Ibid. Luke 5:25.

¹² Adam Hamilton, *The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus*, Copyright © 2012, Abingdon Press.