

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

February 16, 2025

Encouraging One Another

Our Vision

Luke 5:17-26

KEY VERSES

¹⁷ One day while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were sitting nearby, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal.^[a] ¹⁸ Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus,^[b] ¹⁹ but, finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle of the crowd^[c] in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend,^[d] your sins are forgiven you." ²¹ Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? ²⁴ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your stretcher and go to your home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen incredible things today."

Our new sermon series, *Our Vision*, will provide a framework for leading us through the foundational questions of our faith. The Christian life leads us on a "pilgrim journey," as described by Eugene Peterson - an endless quest of how to follow Jesus. This week, our passage from Luke helps us begin by looking at first part of Covenant's mission statement: *encouraging one another*. **Think about the encouraging people in your life. Who has had the most significant spiritual impact on you?**

At first glance the task of *encouraging* seems simple - yet the gospel points to a deeper meaning beyond simply being a nice and helpful person. The gospel's version of *encouraging* involves transformation - to put to death what is earthly within us and experience resurrection. Consider the word *encouraging* as you read this passage. The disabled man is his friends' priority - he's unable to make his way to Jesus and so his friends do it for him. How does Jesus' strange reaction strike you: *When Jesus saw their faith he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."* **How does this layer of complexity about the forgiveness of sins strike you? When have you experienced God's forgiveness on account of the faith of your friends?**

Especially in today's era of *self*, we lapse unconsciously into the mode of working out our own salvation. Most of us are probably more comfortable praying and supporting others rather than asking for help. While essential for us to nurture our own personal relationship with Jesus, His *gospel* way shows us that salvation is vitally linked to the faith of our neighbors. In his sermon, Ben describes the kingdom of God as subversive - God looks beyond our physical needs to our greater need for forgiveness and

reconciliation. **How do you think God might be calling you right now to engage in this type of subversive work in your pockets of community? Think about the people God places in your life this week - will we affirm people in their anger or introduce to them a path of forgiveness?**