

Carried by Friends

Week 2 Bring Someone

By Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

VBS. It's not just one week out of the year. There is a lot that happens, leading up to VBS, including, awesome decorations that you see around. Yeah, yeah, I'm going to I'm going to shout out some people because there are some amazing people who do some amazing work around here. Dana Cliff did this backdrop, and stage decoration.

Amber Knowles did the coffee bar log thing out there. The northern lights, Hilary Berger and Caitlin Ellis and Riley McInerney did the northern lights, up in the atrium. McKenzie Gordon did the black bears on the back of the atrium and she designed the shirts this year? Danny Oslo did, these decorating down the hall?

Jim Brennan is responsible for the fish and so many other things around here. I probably forgot some people, but there's another piece out in the atrium that I want to draw your attention to. And, if you didn't see it on the way in, you'll see it on the way out. But it's this cute little log cabin, the little playhouse house for kids.

It's perfect for the true North theme that we have going on this year. And it was built by Roy and Becky Lamb, and, they're super creative and amazing. And I was talking to Becky about, about it. And, she was like, hey, I, I need one more thing for it. She had created it, and she's like, I just need one more saying one more thing on one more word or something.

And then she said, after Pastor Katherine's sermon last week, she's like, I know what it is. And she put on there, come and see, right? Come and see. And that come and see sign on this log cabin. It says more than we realize.

It's not just a VBS theme. It's not just for kids. As you can clearly see on the picture.

It's the call of every disciple. Come and see. For everyone who claims that they follow Jesus, we are called to invite people to come and see what Jesus can do for them. And sometimes people only see Jesus because we carry them. Come and see what this summer kids VBS camp is all about. Come and see what worship is all about.

Come and see what Jesus can do for your life. Come and see what it means to be a part of a faith community. The disciples invited other disciples with those words, and then Jesus kind of commanded us to do the same come and see, and then go and make disciples. Go to all the nations, sharing the good news.

Go and be my witnesses. Those are Jesus's words to us. So if we are not inviting others or sharing our story with others about Jesus, we're probably not following Jesus. But I get it. I get that it takes courage to share your faith with others, because our world looks so different than it ever has before. But we all know people who don't know the love of Jesus or who have unfriended Jesus along the way, or who have been hurt by the church and decided this is not for me.

Well, last week Pastor Kathryn invited us to write the name down of someone, that that you can invite to come and see. And we wrote these names on these little, triangles we had last week. And there were hundreds of names on these triangles. Some triangles had multiple names per triangle. And these names on these triangles that we collected last week represent people and people who we want to invite to come and meet Jesus, to know more about what it means to follow Jesus.

So let's just say that there were 200 names on those triangles that we collected last, last week. And let's just say half of the people actually follow through and invite someone or share something about Jesus with those people. And then let's say just 10% of those 100 people, actually show up to church or, or are willing to listen about Jesus.

That's just ten people. And that doesn't seem like a lot. But that one lost sheep that Jesus went after didn't seem like a lot either. But we all know someone a coworker, a neighbor, a friend, someone who is struggling with life, struggling with a broken relationship, or with an addiction, or just simply just searching for meaning in life, purpose in life.

And maybe you've mentioned them, mentioned to them, hey, you should come. I have this great church that I go to. You should come, come check it out. Or maybe you've shared part of your story of why you follow Jesus. Or maybe you are still building up the courage to ask someone you know you wrote their name down on the triangle, and you just haven't quite build up the courage to say them.

And maybe you invite someone to come and see, but they don't. What if you say, hey, will you come and see what this is all about? And they say, no? What if they say, oh yeah, I'll, I'll come and see. But then they never follow through. It's hard, first of all, not to take it personally. But there's more to the story in Luke's account of the life of Jesus, Luke's account was written to outsiders or Gentiles.

People kind of like us, and people kind of like the people were called to in invite. So. So Luke wrote this, this, this book about Jesus's life. And there's a story in there that reminds us what it looks like to keep showing up, to keep believing, and to do to do whatever it takes to bring someone to encounter or, and experience Jesus.

So this story is found in Luke chapter five. And first we'll start with verse 17. One day when Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and legal experts were sitting nearby. They had come from every village in Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. Now the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal. Now these legal experts and Pharisees, they showed up for a reason.

They didn't show up because they thought maybe Jesus would teach them something new. They didn't show up because they wanted to see something miraculous. They showed up because they wanted to make sure that their way of knowing and connecting with God was being upheld. For them. The only path to God was through a strict adherence to the law through cleansing ritual rituals, through sacrifices at the temple, through the Day of Atonement, through the roles of the High priest and in their eyes, forgiveness and healing could only happen by following the rules exactly laid out in the Torah.

But if we continue reading in the Scripture, something unexpected happens, because that's what happens when we encounter Jesus. And Jesus goes beyond the rules. Jesus goes beyond the laws and he goes straight to relationships. So again, starting again with verse 18, some men were bringing a man who was paralyzed, lying on a cot. They wanted to carry him in and place him before Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd.

So they took him up on the roof and lowered him cot and all through the roof tiles into the crowded room in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, friend, your sins are forgiven. Now picture this for a moment. These friends were so determined to get their friend to Jesus that they literally tore open a roof.

They weren't going to let a crowd. They weren't going to let the judgmental stares from the legal experts get in their way. They believed that Jesus could do something that no one else could. And Jesus, he looks at their friend, the faith of the friends, and he looks at the man and he says, your sins are forgiven.

Jesus responded not just to the paralyzed man's need to walk again, but Jesus is responding to the faith of the friends who brought him. They believed enough to carry him, climb a roof with him, break it open, lower the man to Jesus. And Jesus saw the faith, their faith. And he responded with forgiveness. Now this didn't sit well with the religious leaders.

Verse 21. The legal experts and Pharisees began to mutter among themselves, who is this who insults God? Only God can forgive sins. So the Pharisees and legal experts, they spoke up and they said, you know what? Only God can forgive sins. And so this claim of Jesus begins to build anxiety with them, build fear with him. Right. And then we know where the end of the story goes.

It's starting to build their fear. But the that the legal experts, the religious elite, they were more focused on protecting their system than celebrating a soul that has been set free. And

but Jesus wasn't finished yet. So here's the rest of the passage. Jesus recognized what they were discussing and responded, why do you fill your minds with these questions?

Which is easier to say? Your sins are forgiven or to say, get up and walk, but so that you will know that the human one has authority on the earth to forgive sins. Jesus now spoke to the man who was paralyzed. I say to you, get up, take your coat and go home. Right away. The man stood before them, picked up his coat and went home, praising God.

All the people were beside themselves with wonder, filled with all. They glorified God, saying, we've seen unimaginable things today. So the man didn't just get up and walk out. The man got up and he walked out and he was changed. And it all started because his friends believed enough to bring him to Jesus. So this kind of bold, faith filled friendship, where you carry someone to Jesus, is not just a story that we read in Scripture.

It is they the call of all followers of Jesus. Even still today. That's exactly the spirit behind a group of ten people from horizons who are headed to India in October. And we are going to be going there. We're going to be visiting the two children's homes that we support through our project Hope Ministry and our team is being led by Ali Belling.

Many of you know her and she is an incredible leader and she is challenging us in the best ways to prepare us for this trip to India. So she is challenging us to be in Scripture. She's challenging us to pray for each other and for every single person that we are going to encounter. And then there's one assignment that Ali has given us that we're all intimidated by.

She has asked us to prepare a story to share while we're there. Now, per her own experience, she knows that when you visit Pastor Probyn and Susama, they will ask you to stand up in front of everyone at worship and share a story. Not just any story, of course, but one of Jesus in your own words and what it means to you.

So here is my version of this scripture passage. And, and I'm going to tell this story as if I'm telling somebody because they've just asked me like, why? Why should I follow Jesus? Because I think that's one of our biggest fears, isn't it? Is that we'll invite somebody to, to get to know Jesus. And they'll ask us why, and then we won't be prepared and have a good answer for it, for them.

So imagine I am just asking my friend. I'm saying, hey friend, I know you're struggling with a lot of things. Why don't you come, come and see and imagine this friend saying, why would I want anything to do with Jesus? Here's my response, friend. Do you ever feel like you're just not good enough? Like you're not worthy enough for God?

Do you ever feel like there's more to this life, that there's some sort of purpose in this life that you're missing out on? Because I was once there, I felt that way. I felt unworthy of God's love at times. I want to tell you this story about Jesus. There's this story where this man who was paralyzed and he was brought to Jesus and by these friends who, who, who, who had faith.

See this? This man was paralyzed. He couldn't walk. He couldn't move. He probably lost all hope in life and wondered what his purpose was in life. But his friends, they're like, we believe something different and we're going to bring you to Jesus. And they brought him to Jesus. And it was so crowded, they felt like they couldn't even get to him.

But they found a way. They brought him to the roof and they tore open the roof, and they and they lowered him down a Jesus's feet. And then Jesus looked at the man and said, your sins are forgiven, your sins are forgiven. And I'm sure the man was like, I want my legs to be healed. Right. Well, what do you mean?

My sins are forgiven? But Jesus wanted the man to know before, Before, before he could walk. Jesus wanted the man to know that he was worthy, that he was loved. He. He didn't ask for forgiveness. He didn't even do anything to get to the place. Right? To be a Jesus's feet. But Jesus was like, first, I want you to know that you are worthy.

And then he healed the man's legs and he walked out and he was praising God because he was changed from the inside, because he knew he was worthy. And see, that's what sets apart Jesus from many other faith traditions, because many other belief systems say that you need to earn salvation, that there is a certain set of rules, there are certain set of morals that you must follow.

And Jesus says, that's not how it works. Jesus says, everyone is a sinner, that nobody's worthy of God's love or God's grace. And Jesus says, that's just not the case. I'm offering this to you, and you don't have to do anything to earn it. I used to think that I had to be perfect in order to earn God's love.

I thought, like I in order to be a follower of Jesus, I had to have it all figured out. And now I know that that's not the case. And now I know that. That I can follow Jesus and I can love God, and I can love my neighbor, even though I don't have it all figured out, even though I messed up.

And now all of a sudden I have this new purpose in my life because I see what Jesus does to people like me who mess up people like me who are certainly not perfect. So friend, let me carry you to church this week. Or at least let me drive my car and pick you up and pick you up and bring you to church.

So will you come and see? Now, I don't know how my friend would respond to a story like that if I shared that with them, but the story in the Scripture see these friends? They literally broke a barrier to bring their friend to Jesus, and we are called to do the same. So when we invite someone to come and see Jesus, first of all, we have no idea how Jesus is going to work in their life, but we can have faith that we know that Jesus will work in their life.

And that's the beauty in the mystery of faith. See that they didn't let a roof stop them. So what's stopping you? What's stopping you from inviting somebody to come and experience Jesus? Well, here's a way that we can move forward past maybe any sort of barrier that we might have. First, we pray by name. Think of either the person that you wrote down on your triangle last week, or a coworker, friend, neighbor, sister, brother, somebody in your life that you know who needs Jesus.

Who needs to know that Jesus loves them unconditionally and write their name down and commit to praying for them every single day this week. The second thing we do is we carry with faith. We do something, simple. It can be simple, but intentional to carry them closer to Jesus. It might be inviting them to church. It might be sharing part of your story.

It might be offering to pray for them or serving them in a small way. But we have to know how to tell our story. If our friends say no or why would I come and see? We have to have a story. So practice your story. Pick a story that means something to you, a story from Scripture that about Jesus, and explain it to them in your own words of why it means something to you and maybe you say it out loud.

Maybe this week, maybe you just start by practicing in the mirror, but start telling your story. And then the third thing is ask is it enough? Are we doing enough? And I get it. We don't want to be those pushy Christians. We don't, right? We aren't the turn or burn kind of Christians. We're the love of God and love your neighbor kind of Christians.

But what if that's not quite enough? What if we back off just a little too much because we're afraid of rejection, or we're afraid to come off a little too pushy? But what if we've backed off so much that that person that we know who is struggling, who is lonely, who wants to have purpose in their life, never experience an encounter.

Jesus. So who is on the mat in your life right now? Who's on that cot? Who is stuck and unable to get to Jesus on their own? Don't give up on them. Don't stop praying. Don't stop believing. Have faith that Jesus can do something for them. Don't stop inviting. Break a roof if you have to, because your faith might be what carries them home.

The friends didn't let a roof stop them, so don't let fear or awkwardness or rejection can stop you. Be the one who carries. Let's pray.

Gracious God, thank you for the people who carried us to you. Thank you for their faithfulness. For the ones who brought us to church, invited us to church, told us about Jesus. Thank you for their faithfulness, and then give us the courage to be those people for someone else. Help us to see who's on the mat in our lives, who is unable to carry themselves and help us to carry them with bold love and persistent love.

Give us the faith, the kind of faith that climbs on roofs, that breaks barriers, that trust you for healing, even in ways that we can't imagine. So may our lives, may may we, we, we live our lives. Always saying come and see. Thank you, God, for your grace. The grace that we don't deserve, but that you have offered us anyway. Thank you for the kind of love, the sacrificial love that you have shown us, that now we can show to the world. God, we say all of this in Jesus's name, Amen.