



## A CROWDED CHURCH (Sermon)

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### I. Introduction

God is good. All the time. It is time again to speak about outreach; and we would like to speak specifically about a “crowded church.” Some churches are crowded; some churches have a small attendance. If we would like to bring about a crowded church, it would be best to learn the methods of Jesus.

The Bible says in Mark 2:1-5, “A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”<sup>1</sup>

What can we learn from this passage about outreach and how to create a crowded church?

### II. The Methods of Jesus

The passage clearly says that the house was so packed with people that there was no more space. People were unable to enter the house through the front door, back door, or window, so they had to carry the paralytic man to the roof and lower him down into the house to see Jesus. We can see several important points in this passage:

#### A. *Jesus was in the house.*

The Bible clearly says that Jesus was in the house in Capernaum and that the house was crowded because so many people wanted to see Jesus. His being in the house shows the importance of working among the people and mingling with them. It reminds us of the quotation of the Spirit of Prophecy that says: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour *mingled with [people]* as one who desired their good. He *showed His sympathy* for them, *ministered to their needs*, and *won their confidence*. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”<sup>2</sup> This shows Jesus’ own successful method of outreach:

1. Socialize. “The Savior mingled with people.” We need to circulate with people if we want to reach people. We can’t isolate ourselves. Just as Jesus was in the house in Capernaum, we need to go from house to house to socialise with people.

2. Sympathize. “He showed His sympathy for them.” As we mingle with people, we can more easily see their needs. We need to show our concern for them. We need to have empathy for them. We need to feel as they feel. But sympathy is not enough.

3. Serve. He “ministered to their needs.” Some people may have physical needs, emotional needs, intellectual needs or spiritual needs. Our service to people will encourage their confidence and make it easier for us to invite them to Jesus.

4. Save. “Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’” People who have confidence in Jesus will more easily follow Him. It is the same with us. If people have confidence in us, it is not difficult for them to accept Jesus when we introduce Jesus to them.

*B. Feeling the presence of Jesus.*

The passage tells us how we can feel the presence of Jesus:

1. Follow the ministry of Jesus. His method of mingling with people, showing sympathy, meeting the needs of people will surely show the His presence in our lives. Therefore, it is vitally important to be involved in various community service projects. The more we follow the ministry of Jesus, the more people will feel His presence.

2. Preach the Word of God. The Bible says, “He preached the word to them” (v. 2). It is important for us to preach the Word of Jesus. Jesus clearly said, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). We need to lift up Jesus. We need to lift up Jesus who died on Mount Calvary. We need to lift up the love of Jesus, who sacrificed His life for our salvation. The more we lift up Jesus, the more people will be attracted to Him. Though the messages of Sabbath or the Sanctuary are important, we should not forget that Jesus is the Center of our message. When we lift Him up, it is easier for people to follow other doctrinal teachings.

3. Emulate the character of Jesus. Remember what Jesus said on Friday evening, only one day before His crucifixion: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (13:35). People will see us as the disciples of Jesus if we have the love of Jesus and the character of Jesus. If visitors come to our church and see members being unkind to one another, they don’t feel that Jesus is in our midst. But if people see people who love one another, they will see us as disciples of Jesus and they will feel the presence of Jesus is in our midst.

### **III. How can we bring people to Jesus?**

We can also learn from this passage how to bring people to Jesus. As we hope to encourage others to come to Jesus in our outreach activities we can learn from this passage:

*A. Knowing the person.*

Why were these people willing to bring the paralytic man to see Jesus? It was because they knew that he needed their special assistance. They knew he was unable to approach Jesus by himself. So they offered time and effort to take him to Jesus. It is similar with us. We need to know the people we would like to bring to Jesus. We need to know their family members, their relatives, and their friends. If we want to bring them to Jesus, we need to know them. We need to know their needs—physical needs, social needs, emotional needs, or spiritual needs. Knowing a person is vital if we are to bring them to the feet of the Cross.

*B. The body of Christ working together.*

How many people worked together to bring the paralytic man to Jesus? Four people working together. Evangelism is a process, and every part of the body of Christ needs to work together to bring people to Jesus. As the apostle Paul said, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). Every part of the body is important and has a certain role to play. It is the same in the body of Christ.

I came from a Buddhist family that converted into a Protestant church when I was seven years old. Then I joined a Methodist church and a Pentecostal Church. While I was a member of a Pentecostal church, I discovered a handbill of an evangelistic meeting. I went to the meeting and an usher welcomed me. Someone helped me to open my Bible. I was touched by the singing

and sermons presented. Someone visited me. I took Bible studies from a youth pastor, and finally an ordained pastor baptized me.

Who took me to Jesus? The Holy Spirit, yes, but the Holy Spirit works through the body of Christ. The body of Christ worked to bring me to Jesus. The handbill distributors, ushers, singers, preacher, youth pastor, and ordained pastors—all of these parts of the body of Christ worked together to bring me to Jesus. So as members of the body of Christ, all are important. Each has a certain role in building the body of Christ, and also in doing the work of ministry.

### *C. Persistence.*

It is exciting to imagine how these four persons brought the paralytic man to Jesus. They were persistent. We can imagine that they carried him from a certain distance. They tried to enter through the front door, but it was impossible because it was too crowded. They tried to go in through the back door, but it was impossible. Finally, they took him to the roof. It was surely not an easy task to bear a paralytic man to the roof, but they were persistent. Finally they were able to connect him to Jesus.

Time and again, we find the importance of persistence in life. Outreach activities can be discouraging at times because there is so much opposition to the truth. Many people face not only difficulty in reaching out to people, but they also face ridicule and even persecution. However, we need to be persistent.

1. We need to be persistent in prayer. Although the Lord responded to the prayers of Daniel on the first day (Dan. 10:12), it was Daniel's persistence in prayer that led him to fast for 21 days before the coming of the angel who told him the answer of his prayers.

2. We need to be persistent in our work. As King Solomon said, "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity" (Prov. 24:16). Although we may fail, we must rise again and again. We must be persistent in our work, knowing that the Lord is working together with us.

### *D. The power of the Word.*

As the paralytic man was lowered through the roof, the Bible says, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven. . . . I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home'" (Mark 2:5, 11). And immediately, "He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" (v. 12).

There is a power in the words of Jesus. When Jesus said, "get up and walk," the paralytic was immediately able to walk. We know the Word of Jesus is still powerful today. The power of God is able to transform the lives of each of us. Every conversion is a miracle, and we need to share the message of salvation to see more miracles of conversion. It is possible if we use the word of God in our lives.

## **IV. Appeal**

Would you like to have a crowded church? The lesson tells us that the house was crowded with people because Jesus was in the house. We need to have the presence of Jesus in our church if we would like to see the church be filled with people. We can feel the presence of Jesus:

- if we follow the method of Jesus,
- if we preach the words of Jesus, and
- if we have the character of Jesus.

We can be successful in bringing people to Jesus:

- if we know the people,
- if we work together as the body of Christ according to our spiritual gifts and talents,
- if we are persistent in our work, and
- if we use the Word of Jesus.

How many of you would like to have a crowded church? All of us can make it happen. May the Holy Spirit inspire each of us, motivate us, equip us, and empower us to do God's work—for His glory.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references in this sermon are from the *New International Version of the Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143, emphasis supplied.