**Calvary Fellowship 7.24.2022 Matthew 9:1-26 “Fighting to Get to Jesus”**

* **So I was out last week b/c I was in Orlando speaking at an event for pastors from all over the country - it was a blessed time**
* My 2 favorite groups of people to talk to are U & pastors
* So I took my family w/ me & we got a couple of days off mixed in as well
* And the last night we were there we went to the Boardwalk b/c that’s our family tradition whenever we go to Orlando, we go to the Boardwalk on the last night
* And I told my kids this story b/c they were too young to remember it
* But about 11 years ago, we went on a family vacation at Disney & we rented those Surrey bikes where several people can sit & pedal
* Well, Mia had been asking all week for us to rent 1, so on the day we left, we rented the bike to appease her
* So we put Xander & Mia in the front since they’re too small to pedal & Carey & I were in the back pedaling
* So we drive the bike around the lake & going up these hills & I’m pedaling as fast I can & Mia says, “Papi, go faster” & I say, “My legs feel like they’re on fire.”
* So we make it around the lake 1 time & Mia says, “Let’s go 1 more time.” Even Xander had his index finger up saying, “yes, yes, yes,”
* So I say OK & once we hit the 1st hill Carey says, “Robert, I’m pregnant. I can’t pedal any more.” - so she stops pedaling & now I’m the only 1 pedaling
* So I make it through, but when we hit the 2nd hill I can’t do it - so Carey says, “I’ll walk. U get up the hill.” - I said, “But honey, you’re pregnant. OK, get off.”
* She gets off & it helps but I still can’t make it up the hill
* Then I get this burst of energy & I explode up the hill to the top
* I turn around to tell Carey & I look & she’s pushing the bike uphill
* I didn’t like the picture of my 7 month pregnant wife pushing us uphill, but I’ll be honest, I didn’t stop her b/c I was exhausted
* The worst part is after that fiasco, we see a family of 4 & all 4 of them are pedaling up the hills & laughing the whole time
* And their kids are painting at me saying, “Mommy, why does the mean man make his wife push him up the hill?” - I was yelling, “Don’t U dare judge me!”
* **But seriously, I don’t think I would have made it up that hill had my wife not intervened**
* I don’t know about U, but I look back on my life & had it not been for God intervening in my life, I don’t know where I’d be in life
* **I almost didn’t enroll in Bible college - most of U have heard the stories about how I was a terrible student in school**
* So I would get the application, fill it out & not turn it in - then I’d throwing it away
* 3 times I did this & a my friend George said to me 1 day, “Bob, have U ever thought about going to Bible College?”
* I said yes & I told him that I was a little scared b/c I didn’t want to fail when it came to learning about the Bible
* But I felt like God had a calling on my life & I thought I was supposed to go, but fear had me stuck where I was
* So my buddy George, who was a journeyman electrician & had no interest in going into ministry, he said, “Yeah, if U want, I’ll go w/ U. But I’m only going to audit the classes b/c I love U, I won’t write term papers for U.”
* So we both filled out the paperwork & that’s how I got started in school
* The last 22 years of my life all happened as a result of 1 person’s intervention
* **God has a way of doing that - He has a way of colliding w/ us & altering a situation or circumstance into something else & making it amazing**
* If U know the Lord, then U know that - U know God can speak a word through a person or change a circumstance, or do something unexpected
* Or God can bring the right person into your life in the right moment & change the trajectory of your life forever w/ that 1 encounter
* But her’s what I find so interesting - most of the time when we tell these stories, they are stories of us totally oblivious to what God is doing
* **In the stories we’re going to look at today, there’s people who are doing whatever it takes to get to Jesus**
* And maybe there’s something powerful for us to learn today in that
* That there’s wisdom in us knowing that we need God in our lives - that we need the power of the Holy Spirit to work in us & this we’re lost w/o Him
* And that knowledge causes us to run to God w/ zeal & determination b/c we know there’s no 1 else who can fix it or make a way or make things better
* And that’s what we’re going to see in our story today
* Jesus is quickly rising to the zenith of His popularity & crowds are following Him wherever He goes - and some of the people have real needs
* Needs that they believe only Jesus can meet & they make a choice to not let anything get in their way to keep them from Jesus
* So if you’re here today & there’s a need in your life - learn the lesson from the people we’re going to look at - don’t let anything keep U from Jesus
* If there’s something that needs to b fixed in your life & U rightly believe that only Jesus can fix it - don’t let anything keep U from Jesus
* B/c in these moments we need Him now more than ever…

**———(v. 1-8)———**

**#1 - I Need Faithful Friends when I’m in Need**

* **We all have people we hang out w/, but that doesn’t make them friends**
* **That’s the problem w/ our definition of “friend” - we throw it around & the word has lost almost all its meaning**
* Friendship is a sacred thing - it’s something that’s not to be taken lightly
* Today we meet someone 3 times & we call them our friend
* I have people that I’m friends w/ on Facebook that I can’t stand - my mortal enemy in High School is my friend on FB & I still can’t stand that guy
* But in other parts of the world, it takes years to earn the designation of ‘friend’ from another person - In America we throw it around to just about anyone
* Friendship in the Hebrew culture that Jesus was born into was a covenant relationship - it was a brother-like bond
* **I had a friend in high school who had candles growing out of his ears**
* This guy had a major ear wax problem & could never hear a thing
* He would always call people or movies the wrong name
* In fact, he called my wife ‘Corey’ for the 1st 6 months of knowing her
* Well, 1 day we were driving in my friend’s car & I was in the back seat w/ him & my friend Jeordie on the other side & I looked at his ears & it was nasty
* And I said something to him directly into his ears & he said, “What?”
* I said, “That’s it. Al, Go inside your house & get me a box of Q-tips & rubbing alcohol. This ends now.”
* And in the back seat of a 1988 Chevy Camaro, I cleaned his ears out
* My friend Jeordie who was on the other side of him threw up as I was cleaning Craig’s ears - In his defense, that may be b/c I made him hold the used Q-tips
* Afterwards his hearing was never better - he could hear a pin drop
* People ask me to define friendship - every time they do, I tell them that story
* **1 of the things that’s so important in this story isn’t mentioned my Matt.**
* Instead, Mark & Luke record what it took to get this man to Jesus
* “Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.” (Mark 2:2-4)
* **Listen, 1 of the ways God meets us when we’re in need is through faithful friends who are there for us in ways that other people aren’t**
* Now, I know most of us would say we have friends - but I’m talking about more than just people to hang out w/ when we’re going somewhere
* When I talk to my kids about friends, I talk about quality friends - that means people who are going to help me make the right choices in life
* **Think about this scene - the house is so packed w/ people that this guy’s 4 friends rip the roof tiles off to get to Jesus**
* Homes in this day had stairs that led to the roof b/c the roof was like a patio that people used during the cooler part of the day
* But they got up there & tore a hole to get their friend close to Jesus
* **Sometimes when we think about miracles, we think it’s our opportunity to do nothing & just sit on our hands while God does it all**
* Miracles happen after we’ve sought God & done what we’re supposed to do & then God blesses our efforts beyond anything we could imagine
* Listen, had these guys not ripped the roof off, I don’t know that this paralyzed person would have been healed
* And it wasn’t ripping the tiles that healed him - it was the faith of his 4 friends who were convinced that getting him to Jesus was how he would be healed
* Please note that - it’s the faith of his friends that caused Jesus to act
* **Here’s my point - if U don’t have friends who are willing to rip roof tiles off for U to get to Jesus, U might have the wrong friends**
* “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)
* What does mean? That U cannot live a good life if U don’t pick wise friends
* C.S. Lewis said it this way, “The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.”
* Friends are like gasoline b/c they will propel U in whatever direction they are headed in
* I am living the life I have today b/c of the friends I surrounded myself with
* All of my friends were people who have chosen God’s will above everything else - and that commitment was like gasoline in my life
* And it’s true for U as well - listen, we’re kind to everyone - we love everyone
* But we have to be very careful about who we call a friend b/c wherever they’re headed is ultimately where we’ll be headed as well

**———(v. 9-13)———**

**#2 - I Need to Good Influences when I’m in Need**

* **Now, U know how people love IRS agents today? It wasn’t like that in the ancient world - they didn’t love paying taxes like we do**
* In this culture, tax collectors were hated for many reasons:
* **#1 - They were hated b/c they were conspiring w/ the enemy**
* They worked w/ the Roman empire - the people oppressing the people of Israel
* Some estimate that the people were being taxed up to 90% of their income
* **#2 - They made their living off extorting people**
* Only Rome & the tax collector knew how much his quota was, so anything above what he was supposed to pay Rome was his pay
* B/c of this, most tax collectors were very wealthy, which in an era when people were starving, made them hated all the more
* B/c of this, tax collectors were not allowed in the temple b/c they were considered unclean - they were excluded from the synagogue
* They were so hated they weren’t even allowed to be a witness in a trial b/c they were considered people of such bad reputation
* Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim notes that a Jewish tax collector was deemed to be on the same level as pigs - totally unclean
* **But Jesus says, “Follow me” - A rabbi said this to a person whom the rabbi believed could be like him - it was a call to do life like him**
* So Levi (or Matthew) gets up & walks away from his career & starts walking w/ Jesus - Understand, He is walking away from an entire life apart from God
* By the way, do U think having a former tax collector on your team makes Jesus look better or worse in the eyes of people? Probably worse
* But I’m really glad that Jesus doesn’t care what other people think
* We don’t know how much Matthew knew about Jesus - we can assume that living in Capernaum, Matthew had heard about the miracles & maybe he had heard Jesus give the sermon on the mount
* But whatever it was, he knew enough to where all it took was 2 words for him to leave his entire life behind & follow Jesus
* **But Matthew had such an experience w/ Jesus that he wanted his friends to experience Jesus as well**
* So Matthew’s friends were other tax collectors & sinners - that’s not a catch all term - it’s a technical term for people who didn’t care about God’s law
* But Matthew throws a party - Mark & Luke tell us it was at Matthew’s house & all of his tax collector friend show up
* But Matthew was using his influence w/ his friends to invite them to know Jesus
* Have U ever put something in a storage bin that had another flavor in it before?
* I’ve done that - I once put a piece of chocolate cake in a plastic bin that had previously contained garlic - guess what? I could have killed a vampire w/ that garlic chocolate cake b/c it was ruined - I mean, I still ate it b/c U can’t waste it
* But that’s what our lives are supposed to look like - influencing people to draw closer to Jesus
* But there’s something important here to note - Matthew was influencing them
* They were no longer influencing Matthew - in fact, we don’t ever hear about Matthew hanging out w/ them after this moment
* It was the disciples of Jesus who were influencing his life from this moment on
* Here’s my point - the people U invite into your inner circle should be the people U want to be more like - the people who are where U want to be in life
* The saying is true, we’re the average of the 5 people we spent the most time w/
* **Whenever we go to Boston to visit my family, by the end of the trip my wife starts dropping her R’s & starts ‘parking the car next to Harvard yard’**
* **“Praise the Lord b/c sin is wicked bad. Don’t believe me? Ask ya motha.”**
* Why? That’s the power of influence - I grew up in Boston & people are always shocked I don’t have the typical Bostonian accent & that’s b/c God healed me
* But we don’t go to Boston & change the way they speak - no, they start influencing us & this is the danger in letting certain people speak into your life
* Now, this doesn’t mean U need to become a hermit & cut off all relationships w/ anyone who isn’t Christian - that’s not a great strategy if U want to reach people
* We have to build relationships w/ people who aren’t believers - that’s part of the Great Commission - if someone didn’t do that w/ us, we’d still be lost
* But what I mean about being wise in your friendships is the people that U receive counsel from & allow to speak into your life
* “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” (1 Corinthians 15:33)
* We want to minister to people & help them draw closer to Jesus, but we need to know the difference between friends & people we’re helping
* If U don’t get this right, you’ll find yourself in a lot of bad situations
* B/c we let people who aren’t where we want to be in life influence us & that never leads to the future we desire or the future God has for us
* “Many will say they are loyal friends, but who can find one who is truly reliable?” (Proverbs 20:6)
* This is why U need to put yourself in environments where friendships can flourish - that can happen in a growth group
* It can happen as U begin to serve at Calvary & meet people
* **Here’s what I want U to do - get out your CC & sign up to serve**
* It’s your opportunity to grow, but it’s also your opportunity to meet people who are headed in the same direction as U
* That’s what U want - people who love God & want to grow just like U
* B/c it’s not just having friends - most of U have friends - it’s having friends who are helping us grow in our walk w/ God
* Every mature person has a story of meeting a person or a group of people & that person catapulted their faith to new levels

**———(v. 18-26)———**

**#3 - I Need to Reach Jesus when I’m in Need**

* **There’s some powerful things in this story that I don’t want us to miss**
* This woman has an issue of blood for 12 years - the girl that Jesus heals is 12 years old accord to Mark chapter 5
* Luke 8 tells us the ruler’s name is Jairus & he says, “If U will lay your hand on her, she’ll be made clean” - the woman says, “If I can put my hand on the hem of His garment I’ll be made clean”
* So why does she say “the hem of His garment”? B/c this woman believes something about Jesus & her desire to touch his garment proves it
* **So what’s the hem? This is a traditional Jewish shawl**
* The fringes of this are called the tzitzit - the borders of the shawl are called the Kanaf - they were also called wings b/c of the look when U raise your arms
* I love this story so much & Mark’s Gospel records that people were pressing him from all around & Jesus says, “Who touched Me. I felt power leave me.”
* This is I love this part of the story, b/c it’s always had this Star Wars element to me - Jesus goes fully Obi-Wan on the crowd
* “Who touched Me? These aren’t the droids you’re looking for!”
* What did this woman reach for? The tzitzit & the kanaf
* The hem of Jesus’ garment - Luke gives us a little more detail
* “Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.” (Luke 8:43-44)
* This tells us that b/c of this issue, she was ceremonially unclean
* That means she couldn’t participate in temple or synagogue services b/c of this hemorrhage - she would have been living a life of isolation
* And as Luke records - not surprisingly, b/c Luke was a doctor - he says that this woman had spent everything she had on physicians, but to no avail
* **Now why would she touch that part of His garment?**
* It’s b/c she believed something about Jesus that changed her life...
* “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” (Malachi 4:2)
* Now b/c of this verse, the rabbis taught you’d know who the Messiah was b/c he would have healing in his kanaf (wings)
* This woman believed Jesus was the Messiah & He was the only 1 who could make her whole
* This woman experienced physical healing, but in Malachi 4, in verse 5, God talks about reuniting fathers & sons
* So certainly we can be talking about the healing of relationships
* In Malachi 4 verse 3, God talks about giving people victory in their lives, which can certainly refer to emotional healing & healing from addictions
* **Here’s the point - God wants to work in your life, but you’ve got to decide that He is the 1 who can heal U & transform your life**
* He invites us to take a step in His direction, not b/c He’s waiting for us to make the 1st move, but b/c He’s already there waiting for us
* Listen, some of us have gone to everyone else & come up empty
* Some of us have spent money we don’t have to fix it & come up empty
* Some of us have gone from relationship to relationship, from addiction to addiction, from shiny new object to shiny new object & we’re still not better
* But what if today U decided that there’s healing in His wings? What if today was the day U decided that He’s the only 1 who can make U well
* He’s the only 1 that can take the broken pieces of our lives & turn that mess into something beautiful - listen, that decision would change everything
* He brings healing in His wings - restoration in His wings - forgiveness in His wings - a new life for U is waiting in His wings
* But you’ve got to reach out in His direction for Him & He’ll meet U…