

“Bringing Down the House”

Mark 2:1-12

Series: STEPS – 2. Take a Step and Breakthrough

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Dark clouds blot out the afternoon sun. Winds whip through the tree branches. Next, rain falls in sheets around my house. A sudden summer storm descends on my neighborhood. I am in the basement checking the fuse box when I hear it. It sounds like Dumbo the flying elephant just landed on my roof. I run upstairs to see a brand new skylight in my new family room. A large limb from our massive maple tree broke off and, like a javelin, pierced through the roof. Rain pours in on our new carpet. Now at that moment I can't be sure, but I think I said a few four letter words...like “Oops” and “Gosh.” Minutes later, Lisa arrives home. She calls me from her car on the driveway and says, “Can you open the garage door for me? It's raining out here.” I calmly reply, “THERE'S A HOLE IN OUR ROOF, IT'S RAINING IN HERE. COME HELP ME!” After we put down buckets, my neighbor helps me pull out the branch and cover the hole.

A few days later the insurance adjuster comes to inspect the damage. He looks at me and says, “Have I ever been here before?” “Uh, no” I reply. “Well you look very familiar,” he adds. Now I get this all the time since I am a very well-known and popular celebrity in the community. “Do you have children?” I ask. “Yes,” he replies. “Did they go to Woodside Christian Preschool?” I probe. “Yes they did.” Then the light of recognition crosses his face. “Oh, you're the pastor. I've seen you at my children's preschool programs. We love the school.” “Wonderful! Thanks so much.” Now I am really beaming with pride. “My kids love your songs,” he says, “Nobody in our house will ever forget Pastor Don.” So I'm not so famous after all.

It may feel like the roof is falling down on you. You may be facing a breakdown right now – personal, emotional, physical, financial. This moment may break you. Yet if you face it with Jesus it can be a breakthrough. Jesus knows about breakthroughs. He had a roof fall in on Him. He sits in a small square house, teaching a standing-room-only crowd that overflows into the street. But his message is suddenly interrupted by the sound of shovels on the roof. Dust, then bits of the mud ceiling shower down on the Master and His students. Chunks begin to fall, heads are covered, people run for cover. Finally, the blazing sun breaks through into that formerly dark and cool room, lighting the particles in the air. Slowly, ever so carefully, a stretcher is lowered on which a limp body rests. It lands in the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

Whenever someone invites Jesus into their house, there is always a breakthrough. if you let Jesus into your house and your heart, if we let Jesus into this church and community there's going to be a shake up. He may even bring down the house. Yet He will only do this in order to build it back up stronger than ever. He doesn't want to break you. He wants you to make a breakthrough. Here are three quick truths that will rock your house if you let Him in.

First, **He Changes You From the Inside Out.** Four heads peer down from the hole in the ceiling. Jesus looks up to the pleading faces and then down to the paralyzed

patient and says a strange five word sentence: “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). I imagine that frowns cross the four faces above. They did not cart their friend along miles of roads and through crowds of people, keep him level as they climb the stairs, smash through a roof and break their backs lowering him down, just to hear a holy man pronounce a spiritual blessing. They want him healed. “That’s it?” they mutter. “He doesn’t need some mumbo jumbo pious talk. Help him to stand up and walk.”

But Jesus always puts first things first. He knows that one day the man’s body will be gone, but his spirit lives forever. Physical illness can be cured by doctors but spiritual illness takes a Savior. People can make themselves look good on the outside but they can’t hide from God the troubles on the inside. Look around the church. You will see bright, healthy, good looking, spiritual singles, couples and families. Years ago one Woodside disciple said when he first came to Woodside he called it “The Stepford Church” because everyone seemed so happy and perfect. Nobody has any problems. But I hear a different story. Many of you tell me, “I’m afraid to let others know what’s going on inside me and my family. Every other family looks perfect. Nobody would understand.” Friends, every family has faults and flaws. There is One who understands. His name is Jesus. Do not suffer in silence. Do not suffer alone. He wants to work on your inside. He is all about healing – body AND spirit, inside AND out.

This is why later in the chapter Jesus calls a tax collector named Levi or Matthew to follow Him. Jesus and his disciples even go over to Levi’s house for dinner. Eating with people is a sign of acceptance. Yet this guest list includes swindlers and sinners, traitors and tricksters, people who love pleasure, partying and pay-offs rather than piety and prayer. I can’t blame the Pharisees for wondering why Jesus is hanging with this crowd. He simply replies,

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Mark 2:17

Jesus says if you want to heal people, if you want to set them free from the disease of sin you can’t quarantine them. You must break through your preconceptions and prejudices and be with them, eat with them, hang out with them, love them and call them. And by the way, you can put air quotes around the word “righteous” or substitute the word “self-righteous” because the truth is we are all sick with sin and we all need the Great Physician and Savior to change us within.

Second, when you let Jesus in your house, **He Shakes Up Your Beliefs**. In the house with the paralyzed patient there is a delegation of religious experts. They gather in the corner to evaluate Jesus’ theology. Is this new Rabbi kosher? When Jesus utters those five words, “Son, your sins are forgiven,” the heresy smoke detector goes off. “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming!” they think to themselves, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7). Their beliefs tell them God is up in heaven not here on earth. God is spirit, He doesn’t have a body. God is invisible, you can’t see Him.

It’s very upsetting, friends, to have God show up at your house. It would be so much better if He just stayed in heaven or in the church building so you can visit Him occasionally on Sunday. But like it or not, God shows up in your house, your business,

your school, your parties, when you are at your best *and* your worst. He is there when you pass gossip, surf the web and social media, fool around, bend or break the rules, lose your temper, throw a pity party or fall into temptation ... once again.

And thank God He is there. For He is the only One who will pick you up when you fall, forgive you when you sin, help you to stand when you are weak – again and again. What kind of God do you worship – a god who is locked up in church buildings or One who is closer to you than your shadow and loves you more than anyone on earth?

This is why one of the barriers Jesus wants to breakthrough is church buildings. Later in the chapter He says,

No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins. Mark 2:22

Please notice most of the stories in Mark do not occur in synagogues. A few do. But the rest are in private homes and public places – dinner parties and town streets, crowds on the beach and boat rides on the lake. If we follow in Jesus' footsteps, we will start churches not in church buildings but in the places where people live, work and play. We will start new wineskins called microchurches – reaching people on their turf, in their comfort zone instead of expecting them to come here to ours. We will be missionaries to this community like Jesus and the first disciples. If you feel God calling you to join Him and start new wineskins, come talk with me.

Third, when you let Jesus into your house, **He Breaks Through Barriers**. The four friends break through the crowd by breaking through the roof. They break whatever barrier it takes to get their friend to Jesus. Notice:

When Jesus saw **their faith**, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” Mark 2:5

Their faith moved Jesus to heal their friend. Are you willing to overcome any obstacle, demolish any wall and break every barrier to get your family and friends to Jesus? It took four people to help one friend be healed. It often takes several invitations from believers to bring someone to Christ. This why we need to work together. The only reason Woodside exists is to lead people to Jesus so He can heal their bodies and spirits.

If you don't care about this, then the greatest barrier of all is your attitude. Even Jesus could not break through the attitude of the Pharisees that day. He tried. In essence, He says to His critics, “I know talk is cheap. I know it's easy to say, “Your sins are forgiven” since you can't see the change on the inside.

But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Mark 2:10-11

With that, the helpless man who came in through the roof walked out through the front door carrying his mat and praising God. Jesus did not break through the attitude of his critics. But, Mark writes,

This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” Mark 2:12

That’s the best part of letting Jesus in your house. When you break through the barriers, you start to see amazing things.

Lisa and I bought our house from Bruce and Judy Hoechner. Judy and Bruce were not members of our church. But Judy joined a Mom’s group and helped with Adventure Club and Vacation Bible School. She tells me she is not good at sharing her faith. She has struggles with her faith. But she and Bruce hosted one of our Alpha courses in their home and invited all their friends to attend. One friend named Diane admitted her spiritual walk was floundering. She and her husband Steve felt they were missing something. Diane knew there had to be something more.

So Judy kept inviting them to Alpha, again and again. “I don’t know what this Alpha is,” Diane said to Steve, “but Judy thinks we need it.” So they signed up. And they stayed. They went on the Holy Spirit retreat. And they found the “something more” they were looking for. Actually, God found them. During the retreat, we prayed for Diane’s mother to be healed. Two years before she was diagnosed with cancer. A year later it appeared in her liver. Radiation, chemotherapy, she had it all. “Two Christmas ago she looked dreadfully sick,” Diane told me. “We thought that was it.” So we laid hands on Diane and prayed for the Holy Spirit to heal her mother.

About three weeks later, we discussed an Alpha video on healing. Many had doubts about healing. Then Diane spoke up. “I have to tell you this. After we prayed for my mother at the retreat, I waited a bit and then I called her. She said, ‘I got the test results back. There is no sign of cancer. I’m cured!’”

Brothers and sisters, I was speechless. Tears filled my eyes. I don’t know why God does not heal everyone. But I do know that Judy and Bruce welcomed Jesus into their lives and their house. They broke down every barrier and brought Diane and Steve to a deeper relationship with Jesus. And Diane and Steve brought her mother to Jesus for healing.

They made a breakthrough and they saw amazing things.