

IN THIS HOUSE - COMMUNITY

Ps. Waweru Njenga – 19 March 2017
“This House” Series
Sermon Notes



QOD:

Who is your Olivia Pope? That person who if you were in a serious crisis, lost your job, your money and facing a huge scandal – who is the person you would call to help and sort you out?

This month we started off on a series called In This House #inThisHouse. We said that while Jesus was such an attractive individual that people could not keep away from him, the same is not often true of his followers today! And so we began to explore His blueprint, how we can live such lives as Gods people that we are attractive to the people around us. And we said that the first step is to realize that **God wants to make your life so attractive that you will influence many people for eternity.**

Some of you here have followed Jesus for years and my prayer is that this series will be a good reminder for you, perhaps with some fresh discoveries. Some of you are pretty new at this following Jesus thing, and I pray you'll find this very useful and transformative. Some here are still observing this following Christ thing – you're not yet convinced that it works or that it will work for you. My hope is that this will give you a good sense of what happens when you follow Jesus.

Please turn with me to *Mark.2:1-12*

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

It's so interesting to see that whenever people found out that Jesus was in town, people came running from all over the place! Fans mobbed him everywhere he went. The crowds were as diverse as those who hound today's celebrities. From sincere believers to skeptical doubters, from fans to opponents, from heart-throbbing teenagers to the reporters. Some came to hear him preach. Some came hoping to see a miracles. Some came because it was the happening event and everybody who was everybody was there! So on this occasion, so many of them came to the house where he was staying, that we are told *"there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door."* The place was completely house full – standing room only! **There was something attractive about Jesus and people could not get enough of him.**

Wouldn't it be awesome if Church was as popular today? If we were so useful that people ran to Christ followers in the office, or to visit their homes because they had something that people felt they needed! Sadly this is not always true for his followers today. Christians are not often seen as the people to run to for answers, or the people that sinners want to hang around. Suspicion...

And that's why we're looking at Jesus' master plan. So anyway, let's get into the story. Enter the paraplegic. We don't know how this man got paralyzed. Maybe it was an accident or an illness. Or maybe he was born that way. We don't even know his name. His life was defined by his condition. There are many people today who are paralyzed and defined by their condition. It could be a physical condition or illness like that paraplegic. It could be a psychological illness, or an addiction or habit. It could be an emotional state – fear or anxiety or self-pity or grief or blame or a sense of helplessness. It could be the mistakes you have made in life – a broken marriage... that abortion you had... the huge financial crisis you are in... the dad who was never there... Many people are paralyzed and defined by their past and have just not been able to move on from it. They may not show it on the outside, but that's just the way it is!

Then there are the four friends. We don't know how they found out about Jesus. Maybe they'd heard the hype on the grapevine, or maybe one of them had witnessed some of his earlier healings live. **Whatever it was, the four guys became convinced that Jesus could help their friend.** And somehow, they managed to convince him to come with them to where Jesus was.

I don't know how you imagine it, but this was not an easy exercise! First they had to wrap him in the mat he was lying on as they didn't have a stretcher. Then they lifted him up, and made their way through the streets toward the house where Jesus was staying, because of course there were no ambulances! Imagine carrying a full grown man on a blanket from Shoprite to here. First of all he's heavy! Then, everyone you pass stares at you. So maybe you're sweating by now and even put him down a few times to rest and change sides. Finally you get to KPS and that's when you realize that everyone else in town had the same idea! *It's like Ne-yo's concert, blankets and wine and Phaneroo all happening in one venue!* People were packed against the doors, squeezed in every corner, faces smooshed against the windows, nobody moving in or out – standing room only.

It was rather obvious they would never get past that front door. Maybe one of them even said, 'I just knew this plan wouldn't work!' There's always a skeptic in every group of friends isn't it? And so they laid him down for just a minute so that they could think. And one of them must have got the bright idea (the idea always comes from one person) – 'what if we climb up with our friend to the roof, break it open, and lower him to Jesus?' Perhaps the skeptic said 'it would never work!' but the rest said, 'do you have a better idea?' And so they all said, 'let's do this!'

So imagine what happens next; Jesus is preaching in the house, and maybe he's just hitting his flow. How do you think Jesus preached, was he like Joel Osteen, nice and smooth, or was he like TD Jakes, flowing and rhyming? The organ playing as he warms up? Sometimes it's fun trying to imagine what it would have been like listening to Jesus! But right there as he's making his point, a loud sound comes from the roof. BOOM! What do you think everyone was thinking? 'Demons, thieves, bomb – get me outta here!' But because the room was so crowded, no one could run, even if they wanted to! Right then, thatch and dried mud begin to fall on the crowd below. Sunshine came streaming in, and through the dust, a man is lowered into the room.

Have you ever wondered what the owner of the house was thinking? While everyone else was marveling, he was probably the only one thinking... 'That's my roof! How dare they break my roof? Who is going to pay for the damage?' But, however stressed he was, he couldn't stop it! He was trapped in place by the same crowd that kept the four men and their friend out of the house!

Now notice that once he was lowered into the house, the paralytic said and did nothing. He didn't even ask to be healed. Maybe it was his friends that made him come. Maybe he was there against his will. Maybe he had been taken to enough faith healers in the past and didn't expect much from this one. So it wasn't his faith that caused Jesus to act. Instead, **the book of Mark tells us that when Jesus saw their faith (meaning the faith of the friends),** he healed the paralytic. In many other stories, Jesus said to people, 'your faith has healed you'. But in this one, it's like he's saying, 'the faith of your friends has healed you!'

Isn't that amazing? Any Liverpool fans in the house? I don't know much about their football but I love their slogan. There are many teams with slogans but I think that team has one of the best, 'you'll never walk alone'! These guys must have been Liverpool fans! The lesson I learn from them is **we were not made to walk alone**

Let's first talk about the **BARRIERS** that stood between the paralyzed man and his healing. Let's start with the barriers. There are many barriers that keep paralyzed people from Jesus today. Most of us in the church are not aware that we sometimes are barriers to those who need to get to Jesus. And yet, in many ways without even thinking, we do stand in the way. **Sometimes like the crowd it's because we are so tight with each other in our cliques that no newcomer can break through.** Sometimes like the teachers of the law it's because we're so keen to have things done and said in the 'right' way that we judge those who don't behave like they're expected to! **Two stories come to mind.** I remember talking to one lady who shared with her group that she was struggling with same sex attractions. She said that all of a sudden, people began to treat her differently. She was so hurt that she decided this church thing was not for her. I remember once talking to an artist who told me that she had attended Mavuno for a while. When I asked why she no longer came, she said that she had joined one of our small groups and had loved it. But after a while, the leader of the group began to act very judgmental and critical about her dressing and her lifestyle. This lady was still struggling in her faith and felt much judged. As a result, she decided to stay home and try to find God on her own.

I'm always grieved when I hear such stories. Over the years, many have come to Mavuno because they're attracted by the services and sermons. They are looking for a place where they can be accepted with all their issues. How do we remain a church that is welcoming to all? How do we ensure we're not the ones blocking people from coming close to Christ? How do we instead become roof breakers, and remove the barriers for those who need to encounter Jesus?

That's where the radical love of the friends comes in. These guys were amazing. In all honesty, someone with major issues (whether physical, emotional or financial) **might not necessarily be the easiest friend to have!** They may not be able to give back as much as you're giving them. They might be draining to be around. They might be so caught up in their own needs that they only think about themselves and even get offended when you try to help. To be their friend is to take on a serious responsibility. Think about it; the paraplegic might not have been able to bathe, dress, go to the toilet, or even feed himself. He may even have resented the fact that his friends were healthy and he was not. To become the friend of a people with issues is not an easy thing! Knowing all this, why would these men still walk with their friend, risking their lives, their reputations and their convenience to get him close to Jesus? Was it because they were members of the same family and felt a family obligation? Was it because they knew he would have done the same for them if the situation was reversed? Or was it perhaps because they were honest enough to realize they too had issues, **even if they may not have been as visible as those of their friend?**

All these are good possible reasons, but the bible doesn't say. The reality however is that we all need such friends. Friends who are not just there for the good times. Friends who are not just impressed by your PR but are willing to look beneath the surface at your brokenness. Friends who will carry you in difficult times and do whatever it takes to bring you to Jesus. **You were not made to walk alone!**

None of us was created to live a solo Christian life. None of us was meant to be a Jack Bauer Christian. None of us has all the answers. Jesus himself chose twelve friends to walk with him through life. They believed in his vision, even when few did. They often failed him and struggled to understand his calling. But towards the time of his death, he said to them, 'I have not called you servants, but friends'. **You were not made to walk alone!**

When we began Mavuno, we didn't want to be just a spiritual restaurant where people come to consume spiritual services and then go home. We knew that was not the masterplan to the life that God desires for us. We wanted this to be a house where real people, with real issues could walk with each other to encounter a real God.

Now I know that not all LG experiences work out well! Some of you tried to join one but then found yourselves disappointed when people did not act very Christian. Some of your groups just broke up because of lack of commitment or as people transitioned to different areas. But I want to say to you what I said to those whose LG did not work out. I said, '**Mavuno is not a church for perfect people**, it is a church for imperfect people who desperately acknowledge their need for God' so don't give up because the people around you have issues. Try again!

So, what does this mean for us and our life groups?

What is a Mavuno Life group?

1. **Meets weekly for 3 things.** Association, accountability and Application. These groups are led by Mavuno leaders and are our main component of discipleship and transformation. All our discipleship experiences happen in Life groups.

So what's next for our Life groups?

- a. **You will receive a call or a visit from your area code pastor.** They will get to meet you and know how you and your life groups are doing. We want to know if our life groups are the life giving relationships they were intended to and if not help your group get there.
- b. **Non Healthy groups will be reorganized:** Healthy means you meet on a weekly basis, are sharing Mavuno leadership and sermons, are serving regularly, doing social justice together and inviting non-Christians to church and Mizizi or outreach events. Don't panic, your pastors will walk this journey with you to get healthy again, and will involve everyone's input, so engage them!

Some groups have history and social bonding but are not **fulfilling purpose**. You may continue with these, but those will not be regarded as life groups, just hang outs. We want to invite you to begin to transition to meeting at home, in your area code. Call your old group-mates together and give it another try. It's worth fighting for! Or if the season for that group is over, people have scattered and moved to other churches, have a final party, release each other well, and join another group. **You were not meant to walk alone!**

True transformation happens in community. My prayer is that when skeptics walk into this church, having heard all manners of rumors about Christians, they'll look at us and they'll say, 'wow, they truly love each other! This is not a Sunday Christianity. This is not make-believe-religion. There's something real about how these people accept each other. There's something here that can't be faked. This is the life I've always wanted! Remember, **you were not meant to walk alone!**

Take Out:

- a. **Engage with your LG:** Set LG meetings as a part of your Christian disciplines, not something to give your left over time! Work with you area code pastor to access the health and needs of your group.
- b. **Commit to love others:** For some it will mean to enter into new relationships in a new group, for others, it's to begin a new group, for others, begin to be God's story-teller and bring others to church. For others, it's to be a Life group host. Whatever the Holy Spirit is saying to do, do!
- c. **Commit to transformation.** Many of us come here broken, hurting, lost, confused, and even now, we are still changing, GOD IS AT WORK!!!! You won't be broken forever. Allow God to love on you in this house, to help you and connect with others. Don't quit yet!