

Bring'em

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[0 : 00] Every Bible, I want you to turn to Mark chapter 2, Mark chapter 2. Then I want you to take this card and I want you to hold it up, okay?

This tells me if he's lying a little while ago or if you actually have one. Now while you're holding it up, let's pray together. Lord Jesus, I ask that you'll lay upon our heart, that you'll open our eyes, that you'll help us to see what you'd have us to see and help us to follow as you lead.

In Jesus' precious name, amen. In four weeks, we'll celebrate Easter and it is always a wonderful time to honor the Lord together and to celebrate our new life through his resurrection.

If you have other plans on Easter and you can get out of it, cancel it, all right? And make sure that you are here. If you've not made plans for Easter, then don't overbook.

Make sure you're here. It's a significant day. We're hoping for record attendance. We have been averaging about 200% of what we normally have on Sunday on Easter.

[1 : 29] And so I encourage you to be here and get here early and be a part of it. Last year, we made a commitment weeks out from Easter and it worked.

Lives were changed by that and God's blessed our faithfulness. And so I want us to commit again today publicly and to lay it out before the Lord.

This four by four card that you have is a prayer card. And it is my request that you would write down, you can do this while I'm preaching.

I'll let you. Write down four people that you want to pray for to invite to join us at Easter time.

It may be somebody who don't care anything about church. Don't know anything about the Lord. Don't care anything about the Lord. But if God lays that person on your heart, you write them down.

[2 : 36] It could be somebody that does know the Lord, but they're just not active in church. They're not faithful. Then you write that name down. I don't know what God's laid upon your heart to do.

And he may not have laid anything on your heart at this point, but that's why I'm going to preach for the next few minutes. And while he does, I want you to write that down. Now, I went through this morning and I put a pen down this aisle on both sides and down this aisle on both sides.

So if you're sitting on the end, don't be hoarding up your pen, all right? Pass that down. Somebody might bump you in the middle of the sermon. You can do that. Hey, I need that pen. I thought of somebody else, you know?

And y'all share that like you Christians, okay? Share that pen. And hopefully it works. If don't, nudge the guy in front of you and say, hey, we need your pen. So, and as I preach this morning, I want you to write down those names.

Now, I'm telling you that I have prayed that God will let those names flow in your life. That you'll know who they are. And it may be somebody that you think, this ain't going to happen.

[3 : 43] I'm not asking you to do anything this morning except write down names of folks that you commit to pray that God would give you the opportunity to invite.

It might even be a circumstance right now where you say, I ain't going to invite them people, all right? Well, I ain't telling you to invite them. I'm asking you to pray about inviting them, all right? And then me and the Lord working on you this week and all those names, all right?

That God would open up that. And I will give you ample opportunity in coming weeks to follow up on this, okay? But all I'm asking for this morning is for you to simply say, Lord, you've given me these names.

I want to write them down. And I commit to pray for these names as possibilities to invite on Easter.

God's been wonderful to us. And Easter is a wonderful time to invite people to come and see what God's doing. People will come on Easter and at Christmas.

[4 : 58] We call them Christers. They'll come at no other time but those times. They think they've checked the block. When they get here, I'll tell them they hadn't. But they'll come if we'll invite them.

People will come on Easter when they won't come at any other time. And we have something to share, folks. We have something to share if we have Christ.

We have no idea how significant it could be if we just pray and invite someone to come.

We have no idea. And I want us to see what can happen when we bring one to Jesus. It's in Mark chapter 2, beginning in verse 1.

And it says this, and when he returned to Capernaum after some days, talking about the Lord, it was reported that he was at home. Many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

[6 : 03] And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 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. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like this? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

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?

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

[7 : 12] He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all so that they were all amazed, glorified God and glorified God saying, we never saw anything like this.

When Jesus entered Capernaum, there was a buzz in the air. Jesus was in town again.

He had previously been there. And when he had been there, he taught in the synagogue. And after teaching and eating at Simon's house, the whole town came and more were healed.

He pulled away the next morning and went to pray. And when he got up, he went and preached in Galilee. Now Capernaum is in the Galilean region.

And all of that area overlooks the Sea of Galilee. It is pretty rolling pasture there. It's the area of the Sermon on the Mount as well.

[8 : 22] It smells of Jesus up there. I'm just telling you, it does. You can sense his influence. The Galilean people have a different countenance to them.

There's just something different about them. They look Galilean. They act Galilean. I don't know how to say. It's pretty neat to see. Well, this morning in our passage, he returns to Capernaum.

He has taught folks. He's healed folks. He fellowshiped with folks. And they spread the word and more folks were coming. And he stopped at someone's place.

And a crowd surrounded the place. And Jesus began to teach. Now I don't think this was an organized revival meeting. I don't think they made flyers and put them out.

I don't think they had newspaper announcements about it or anything like that. Instead, it was spread by word of mouth, which, listen, is the best way to get the message out.

[9 : 22] We will advertise our Easter schedule. We will put it on social media. We'll boost it and let other people see it more.

We'll do everything we can. But I promise you, whatever we do will not be as great as word of mouth can be.

When you speak to somebody, you know with a personal invitation, it is the best way to get the message out, period. We call them testimonies.

And your testimony is the best way to get the word out. The result of testimonies was a house overflowing with people. The room was full.

The doorway was full. The windows were full. People were everywhere. And there was a special need on the outer edge of the crowd. And thankfully, that man had help.

[10 : 24] Nothing like good friends. And this man was paralyzed and he needed help. And thankfully, he had friends. And they had a burden for him. And they wanted him well. And when they heard of Jesus and they saw his power, they wanted to get their paralyzed friend to Christ.

And that's what we need to do. I think this lays out exactly how it happens. One is we bring them. This man could not come to Jesus by himself.

He was physically unable to do it. Jesus may pass by him, but he will not pass by Jesus. He was physically lame. Physically incapable of coming.

Do you know what? There are that many more people who are spiritually incapable of coming.

Romans chapter 3 verse 10 through 12 says this. As it is written, none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands.

[11 : 32] No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. It's followed up by verses 17 and 18 that say, And the way of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. You don't wake up to the fact that you need Jesus on your own. It don't happen like that. God always makes the initiative in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls.

And you know how he does it? He often does it by using us to do it. He has commissioned us to join him on the task of bringing others to him.

Now I will tell you there will always be a resistance to that. There will always be. There is an inner resistance within us to do that. You just soon may not ask you to write down names to pray about to invite to church.

You just soon not invite anybody. You just soon mind your own business. That's a spiritual resistance, quite honestly. It's easy for us to do just that.

[12 : 46] And unless you're spirit-filled and led by the spirit, you're not going to share Christ with others in a spirit-filled way. It is not our natural tendency to do that.

We may talk about who won the basketball game yesterday. We may talk about the new car that we just went in debt for. We may talk about the new job that we've got.

We may talk about our grandbaby or moan about our youngins or whatever the case may be. We may do that. But the reality is when it comes to talking about the Lord, there's always going to be a resistance in us that do that.

What if somebody's not interested in that? And if somebody's not interested in that, that scares a lot of Christians off. I don't want to talk about somebody like them and I might feel comfortable with that.

And I'm going to tell you something. Satan's all over that. He loves that. He just soon you mind your own business. He's in the effort. He's in the business of oppressing Christians, influencing society, and indoctrinating the carnal man to stay that way.

[14 : 00] And in reality, we're in a war. I talked about that last year. We're in a war. And if we're not sharing Christ, we're losing the war. Because God chooses to use that. Most people will never come to know the Lord if Christian friends don't bring them to Christ.

We think it's none of our business when Scripture tells us it is. It's clear that it is our responsibility. We think that they can see Christ optioned clearly in their mind.

When Scripture tells us they cannot. They can't see that. Why can't they see that? John 1.5 says that Jesus is the light that's shining in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it.

Never expect someone spiritually in the dark to become spiritually enlightened without the outreach of a Christian friend. Jesus said, pray for the workers of the harvest.

Jesus said, God opened their eyes to see the fields that are white in the harvest. The last thing he said was he commissioned us to go and make disciples. And the active verb there is not go, but it's make disciples.

[15 : 09] It is to share Christ with folks around us. All folks in need must know that the Savior can solve their needs.

So bring them. Do all you have to to bring them. Including go out of the way to do it.

Go out of the way. These guys had a plan. I think they just planned to lead him through. Maybe we can just tell folks to get out of the way for a minute and bump him through.

But the crowd was too great. They couldn't get through. So they went to the nth degree. Four of them carried him to the roof. Now typically these homes would have had clay steps on the side of the home.

They'd have a flat roof on them. And they climbed those stairs and began to tear through that roof of hay and dried mud. Now can you imagine the scene inside as Jesus was teaching?

[16 : 14] Because the roof began to fall. What if his friends would have said, that's too much work. What if they said, maybe we'll just try later.

What if they said, what are people going to think? What if they had said what I would have thought? What's the owner going to think? You know? What's Jesus going to think?

We're going to interrupt him by busting a man through the roof. Why don't we just try this later? All those responses would have been easy to do, but none of them would have been acceptable.

It was the day of a miracle. And none of those friends knew that when they got up that morning. They never knew that. You never know when God's going to do a miracle in somebody else's life through your effort.

And the question is, what's too much? I mean, think about that question. When have you went too far to lead someone to Christ?

[17 : 32] When is it too much? When have you done too much to lead someone into a real relationship with Christ and keep him or her out of an eternal hell?

When do you give up trying on that? These guys showed up. And they showed us that you don't.

It's never too late. God works in extreme efforts. It's in those times that he often makes his greatest moves. And I want you to notice the reason for it.

I didn't put this in here. Scripture says this. Jesus did what he did. He said in verse 5, because of their faith.

It does not say the man's faith. It says he did what he did because of their faith. Now, what does that mean?

[18 : 35] I'm not telling you the man didn't have faith in Christ. I'm not telling you that. This is how I think it went down. And you can disagree with me. You've got a right to be wrong. But I believe this is how it went down.

And I believe those fellas said, Jesus can do a miracle in this man's life. And I think we need to bring him to Jesus.

So you grab a corner and I'll grab a corner and let's get this. And when they got there and all that crowd was there, somebody in the back went, uh-uh. This ain't going to work.

Hey, man, I got to go. You know, something. Somebody. There's always one. No, you're coming with us. And so they did what they did. And I believe when that man saw their effort and saw their strong faith in the Lord Jesus, God used their influence to place a faith in his life to trust Christ for what Christ was going to do in him.

It was the faith of believers that got him to the point where God initiated the faith within him that he needed to be saved and changed and healed.

[19 : 58] Because God chooses to use us in that process. Let's not let our lack of faith keep someone from coming to Jesus.

Let's go out of our way. Go out of our way. And when we do, he'll meet them. He'll meet them.

After they did all that, Jesus did not even do what they wanted him to do. Or at least he didn't do what was obvious to do. He handled something else. Jesus looked past the physical condition of this man.

He saw his spiritual condition. And you know what? He always does. Jesus always looks past the physical condition and looks to the spiritual condition.

You may have something on your mind. It's a physical matter. You may have something on your mind and it's a material matter. You may have something on your mind and it's a possessive matter. Something that's weighing on you.

[21 : 07] And I'm going to tell you, God always looks past whatever that is and looks to the spiritual matters. He always does that. Yes, he healed this man as proof of what he could do in his heart.

But I bet nobody thought that was how it was going to go. Understand something. It is not our job to determine someone's greatest need.

It's our job to get them to Jesus. Jesus will meet the needs regardless of what they are. Jesus will work it out.

We often think sometimes that somebody needs to change their lifestyle first. I can't invite them. I mean, look at the lifestyle they live. That they need to somehow clean up their life before we can do that.

That they need to change something within them. Or maybe they need to change the places that they go. Or maybe they need to act differently.

[22 : 07] Or to show a concern for spiritual things. And that will hold us off sometimes from sharing our faith with someone.

From just, look, I ain't even asking you to share your faith. I'm just asking you to pray about inviting them to church. Well, they don't look like us.

They don't act like us. They don't go the places we go. How in the world would all that work out? It ain't your responsibility to work all that out.

Bring them to Jesus and he'll work out those things. And on that note, if you're here this morning and you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. And you're waiting until you change something in your lifestyle.

I got news for you. You're going to wait too long. If you wait until you stop going to the places you go. You wait until you act differently. You wait until you share a concern for such spiritual matters in your life.

[23 : 05] If you wait for those things to come to Christ. You may never come to Christ. I want you to never forget that people without Jesus act like people without Jesus.

People that don't have Christ in them does not have Christ in them. And because they don't have Christ in them, they're not going to look Christ-like. They're not going to act Christ-like.

They're not going to adhere to the things of Christ. If we could fix all those things, we wouldn't need a Savior. But thank God we can't fix all those things. And if you're waiting to fix those things, you just bring whatever your need is to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when you bring it to him, he'll take care of the rest. Don't worry about what God needs to do in somebody else's life. Don't worry about what God needs to do in your life. Come to Jesus.

Get them to Jesus. He'll meet them where they are. And he'll change them to be what he would have them to be. You've got to trust the Lord. Our judgment is insufficient.

[24 : 05] Even our good old Sunday sanctified judgment. It's insufficient. We've got to trust the Lord in the matter. He'll meet them where they are.

You can see it again and again in Scripture. In the Gospels. Every time he came to a need in somebody's life, he met them where they were and brought them where they needed to be.

He'll change things. I want you to notice what it says in verse 12. It says, 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.

This transformation was not done in secret. People saw what took place. And when they left there, they couldn't help but share it. It's powerful when somebody comes to Christ.

It does not only affect the person that comes to Christ. It also affects so many others. Salvation is not meant to be done in inclusion. It is to be made public.

[25 : 15] And I'm telling you, when it's made public, say people get fired up, lost people get saved, private Christians will make it public, churches will experience revival, the kingdom of God will grow, heaven will celebrate, the angels will shout.

I'm telling you, all kinds of things happen when somebody just obeys God and just follows through. Every time somebody gives their heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ here and admits that publicly and shares that with you.

Or every time somebody comes and they're to be baptized in this church, I always tell them, Your influence in standing up for Christ is well beyond anything you'll ever know this side of eternity.

I get to see the evidence of it. Every time I baptize somebody else, they'll share with me. Somebody will share with me in that group how somebody else's influence affected them. How they saw somebody else get baptized and how that influenced them.

I see it again and again and again. But I'm telling you, that does not even, that's just the tip of the iceberg of what we'll know in eternity. When we realize the lives that have been changed because we stood up for Christ, because we made it public, and because we shared our faith with other folks.

[26 : 30] There are people, you better be writing. There are people that you'll write down on this list, and you'll pray about inviting, and you'll invite.

They got me on a leash this morning. And you'll pray about inviting, and they may not come.

But you know what will happen? What you know will happen is that if you'll just take the rest of this week and pray for these people daily, God will put a burden on your heart.

He'll put a spur in your saddle. He'll change your tune the way you look at somebody. And he'll work in you. And we may never know this side of the turn of how he's working in them while we're praying for them.

And folks, that's the worst of it. Because the best of it is that as you're writing that name down today, God's working in the heart of that person.

[27 : 43] They won't admit it to you mostly. Most of the time they won't. But God's doing a work in their heart. And God's preparing them, just like he did with Philip.

When he told him, go down to that crossroad, there's a chariot coming by. And there's a man in there that you need to speak to. What am I going to say?

He didn't say that. He just went. He just went to the crossroad. And when he got there, the man was reading scripture that he couldn't understand. And you know what it was? It was a messianic prophecy about what the Lord Jesus would do.

And when he came to that man and shared with him, that man said, How in the world can I know what this means? And he shared with him what it meant. They had a pool of water over to the side. And the man said, Why not be baptized right now?

There's water. Let's do it. God set all that up. It wasn't Philip. God set all that up. And that's what God will do. Why?

[28 : 41] Because some friends went to the extreme to just bring a man to Jesus. Jesus is the one that heals the deepest herds.

Jesus is the one that cures the deepest one. Jesus is the one that changes somebody inside and out. And because many lives witnessed it, they've never been the same since.

I want you to imagine, just to use your spiritual imagination for a moment, what if you'd been standing in the doorway? You might even been the jerk that didn't let them by. And you're standing in the doorway hearing Jesus.

I ain't letting them men by. They're going to get my spot. I ain't going to let them get my spot. And then you watch them. I was trying to be funny when I called you a jerk. But you took that seriously. And they ripped a hole in the roof and brought that man down.

And not only was he saved that day, but he got up, wrapped up his bed, and I guarantee you the crowd cleaned out. They made a way for the man to walk out.

[29 : 45] They weren't about to touch him. Scared the death of him. And he walked right out of there. And I'm telling you, you know what happened to you who was standing in the doorway when you left there? You should have seen what I saw.

I ain't ever seen nothing like it. That blew me away. They brought that man to Jesus, and his life was forever changed. Scripture tells us that when people left there, they left there marveling and talking about it.

And I don't know about you, but I want to be a part of being marveled by the work of God and to leave here talking about it. And that's what happens when you bring them to Jesus.

The last thing Jesus said before he ascended was, go and make disciples. How do you do that? You stick to the assignment. You write the names down.

Now, the sheet I've given you is perforated. Okay? If you don't know what that means, it means it's got little holes in it.

[30 : 52] We can tear it off real easy, okay? This top copy is yours. The bottom copy is not.

And so I just want you, once you fill that out, to rip that off. And in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to do something.

Before I get into that, I want you to know something. We're going to do something different here in a moment than we normally do. But if you're here this morning, and you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to know you can come to Jesus just as you are, and he'll forever change your life if you'll surrender your life to him.

If you've got questions about that, we can answer them. We'd love to guide you in that process. And don't let anything that we're about to do interrupt you from doing exactly what God's told you to do.

Maybe you're here, and you are a Christian, but that's a private matter for you. You've never made it public. And the reality is that God's laid upon your heart that you need to make that public.

[32 : 14] You need to tell others what Christ has done in your life. Jesus, by his example and by his commission, tell us to do that through baptism. And if you've never been baptized as a believer, you need to obey God today, and you come.

I'll be available. I'll be here for you. I'll be happy to guide you in that process. We're not going to do it this morning. We'll schedule a time. You just come as God leads you. Maybe God's drawing you to First Baptist Church.

You know that God's doing a work in this church, and he's doing a work in your life, and you feel led to be here. You come. We'd love to guide you in that process, and don't let what we're about to do interrupt that.

You just obey God. For the rest of you, I want you to take this small sheet, if you will, right after I pray, and as soon as we stand, to do it as efficiently and prayerfully and quietly and smoothly as possible, and that is to just bring this card down and lay it at the foot of the cross.

Just lay those people before the Lord. Keep your prayer marker. And every day this week, don't you have to contact them at all.

[33 : 34] Don't say anything to them. You just pray. Pray that God will work in their life. Pray that God will open up an opportunity for you. Pray that God will give you the boldness. You just pray.

That's all I'm asking you to do. There's more coming. That's all I'm asking you to do this week. I want us to prayerfully prepare for what God's going to do. You lay that before that cross, and I'll promise you something.

When this service is over, I'm going to collect those names, and I'm going to take them to my prayer closet, and we're going to pray together over these folks. Some of them need the Lord.

Some of them need to get their tail in church. Some of them need to get their heart right. That's just between them and God. And me and you are going to pray them before the throne of God.

And we're going to ask God to do what only God can do in the midst of that. Lord Jesus, I love you, and I thank you for the power of prayer, for the power of testimony, and more than anything else, the power of Christ.

[34 : 49] And I ask your God that you'll help us to trust you completely today as you work and move in our midst right now. We love you dearly, and we thank you for the opportunity.

In Jesus' precious name, amen. You know what I believe in Jesus' precious name, it's a beautiful night.