

SERMON

BE A GOOD FRIEND

Preaching text: Mark 7:24-37

Our Bible story total is about a man who had a handicap. Jesus and the disciples were in the region of the Decapolis. Some people brought a man who couldn't hear and could barely talk. They begged Jesus to lay his hands on the man. The fact that the man was able to talk, although with difficulty, indicates he was probably not born deaf. If he had been born deaf, he probably wouldn't have been able to speak at all. Sadly, a lot of people probably made fun of him the way people make fun of handicaps.

One lesson we can take from this is that **Jesus had special compassion for people who were handicapped.** It comes up all the time in the gospels. The blind, the lame, the hearing impaired ... they all had a friend in Jesus. Think about how long it has taken for society in general to catch up with Jesus' compassion.

Even though this guy had his challenges, he had a couple of important things going for him. For one thing, **he had people in his life who cared about him.** Notice that he had friends who brought him to Jesus. It makes such a difference when you are struggling to cope with a disability when you have people who care and are willing to help. We show the compassion of Jesus when we are those people who care.

Did you notice that Jesus' friends didn't ask Jesus to heal the heal him? They only asked Jesus to put his hand on him and bless him. In other words, his friends were concerned with his spiritual needs! Of course, they must have also been concerned about his physical needs, but that is not necessarily why they brought him to Jesus.

They knew Jesus was a holy man of God. They felt that their friends would be blessed just by being in Jesus' presence. These friends weren't just concerned about his physical needs, but his spiritual needs too.

How often do we overlook what might be someone's most significant needs? For example, some needs are easy to identify. For those who are homeless due to the floods out east or the fires out west, they have needs for just about everything. If we have friends without food, most of us would gladly rush to the store and buy them a shopping cart full of groceries. If we have a friend getting evicted from their home, I think most of us would offer them a place to stay for a while if we had room.

But how often do we miss it when people are hurting on the inside and have spiritual needs? How many times have you known someone who is going through a tough time in their marriage ... or recently lost a loved one ... or is facing a huge health crisis ... and thought to invite them here? This is a caring faith community. They could get the support of people who will pray for them and care about them. I wonder if more people suffer from spiritual problems than physical ones. Why is it so difficult to intervene then?

Jesus gave us two commandments: #1: Love God. You being here thing morning is a good indication you love God. #2: Love each other. The most significant need some people have is for a friend to reach out to them with spiritual guidance. The man in our reading had friends like that.

So, they brought him to Jesus, the one person who could help him. Is there someone that you know who needs to come to Jesus? Everybody needs somebody who cares about their spiritual needs. Take a look around you this week. Next week is Rally Day. We will all be together for one service at 10:00. It's a great time to invite people here! If it's too much to invite them to church with you ask them if you can pray with/for them.

Is there someone you know who is hurting spiritually? Be the presence of Jesus to them. Be a good friend. The kind they need right now.

AMEN.