

- I. How do you help people when it's not easy? This is week three of our series on kindness.
 - A. We've considered looking at others needs and the Golden Rule, and we've explored our own motivations to be kind.
 - B. Today we'll consider what we do when our efforts don't seem successful or when we seem not to know what's next as we try to make a difference in the lives of others
 - C. Some needs are easy. Someone is sick and can't cook for themselves so we bring them food. Someone needs to be picked up so we drive and get them
 - D. Other needs offer more challenges. Someone is struggling with depression or with a moral dilemma, and we want to help, but don't know how much is helpful, and how much is actually just making things worse. Or even more simply, someone is worried about their finances, and we aren't. How do we help without seeming to be a busybody or a know-it-all?
- II. We'll look at the story I read today from the spiritual perspective of one of the people bringing that paralytic man to the Lord
 - A. In other words we'll consider what it means to help someone, and particularly to help someone when it seems that they can't or won't help themselves
- III. To start with it's worth noting that four of this man's friends were taking him to the Lord.
 - A. We know the African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." We don't do most important things by ourselves. Only the Lord is self-sufficient. We need help from others, to survive, but also to help others in need
 - B. One of those four must have been the creative one who thought to go up on the roof. Maybe two others were just willing strong backs happy to do the work of someone told them what to do. Maybe another had practical skills that allowed him to take the roof apart and then put it back together such that the owner of the house would not be upset with their day's work
 - C. At a deeper level, when we help we need four of us. Four stands for a time when what we know and what we love come together – just what we want when we try to help
 - D. It also means a state of interior goodness, which in this context would describe helping others from a deep sense of love or altruism
 - E. So 4 here describes a time when we really want to help, not just an the outside, but to make a difference that lasts
- IV. This is important because these people were carrying a paralytic, someone who couldn't help himself, who was a dead weight
 - A. Can you remember a time when someone in your life felt like a dead weight, at least in one area?
 1. We're all dead weights in our areas of weakness, and we watch others effortlessly navigate life in those areas and can feel so frustrated
 2. Well it can be equally frustrating watching someone we love seemingly

- wallow in a painful state, unable to extricate themselves
- 3. We can't will them to change. I'd guess most of us have tried that, offering many helpful suggestions, or pointed advice. But it doesn't work. They have to see for themselves the need to change, know what to do, and then choose it, just as we need to in our areas of paralysis
- 4. The story will offer light on a few of the ways we can move forward in carrying people to the Lord, who is the one who heals
- V. When the men arrived carrying their friend, they found so many people crowded around trying to interact with the Lord that they could not reach Him
 - A. They couldn't even get to the doorway, let alone to the Lord
- VI. Think about the external symbolism of that from a couple of perspectives
 - A. Someone is coming to the Lord but feels crowded out. This could depict the thought that the Lord doesn't have time for me. He's running the universe. How important are my concerns?
 - 1. Or maybe: "I've messed up so many times. How can I come to the Lord. I'm not worthy."
 - B. We can also feel that when we try to help others. "Someone wiser would know what to do or say. I guess I'm not good enough to serve as a channel for the Lord for this person."
- VII. That's not the way the Lord sees us
 - A. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matt 6:26)
 - B. "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt 10:30-31)
 - C. "You were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; Fear not, for I am with you." (Is 43:4-5)
 - D. And then more extensively: "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.... Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Ps 139:13-24)
 - E. And here's the crux of the matter. We are precious in the Lord's sight; He has formed us and loves us; and at the same time we need to change
- VIII. What stands in the way?

- A. In the story it is people, but those people, like any barrier in the Word, stand for evils and falsities
 - B. When speaking about our God-given ability to understand goodness and truth we read, “but if the persuasion of falsity which *obstructs* is removed, he then understands and perceives that truth is truth and that good is good” (AE 547)
 - C. Another passage says, “What is heavenly and spiritual is flowing in constantly from the Lord, but evil together with derivative falsity exists, and falsity together with derivative evil, which flow in from the bodily and worldly interests and obstruct the reception of what is heavenly and spiritual.” (AC 2411)
 - D. When we try to help people we likely have false ideas that stand in the way.
 - 1. One is that we may not see that person is precious in the way the Lord does. Our anxiety or fear might crowd out our sense of love and compassion. When we love others and they sense that love, they are more open to our help
 - 2. But we may have many other false ideas that crowd out a sense of the Lord just as that crowd blocked those 4 men. Could you name your crowd of lies, at least some of them?
- IX. So picture those people standing at the edge of the crowd unable to get through
- A. How often have you been those people? It was clearly impossible, so they might as well go home
 - B. Change seems impossible. Helping someone seems impossible
 - C. But we know that’s not how the story goes.
 - D. Let’s circle back to the meaning for four again. Four means internal good, a good that sees what the Lord wants, and this good is all-in on doing what’s right
 - 1. This good does not say, “I’ve failed; I might as well go home.”
 - 2. This good looks for another solution
 - 3. And because this good is seeking to do the Lord’s will, it is open to His guidance showing a different way of thinking that changes our approach
 - 4. It was not at all obvious or intuitive to break through the roof. It was a radical idea, just as trusting that the Lord’s way will work seems radical to our natural self, especially the self that feels blocked by false ideas
 - a. Happiness comes when we treat others needs as having as much value as our own. Hmm. Even that person who always annoys me?
 - b. Happiness comes when sex stays only in marriage. The world might mock at such an idea. Could it really lead to happiness to forego pleasure now?
 - 5. When we decide to really try with all our beings, the Lord lifts up our minds to the roof
 - 6. “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains—from whence comes my help? My help comes from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.” (Ps 121:1-2)
- X. A roof, as we might guess, stands for the inmost part of us.
- A. Falsity and our selfish desires below block us
 - B. But inwardly we value what the Lord says in His Word and we are open to the

Lord's love, not because we are deeply worthy, but because we know that the Lord is bountiful and merciful

- C. That place in us is open to the Lord, and it is from that place that we have the potential to share and connect with others in a way that brings the Lord present with them.
 - D. I suspect it has much less with what we say or do than it does with the spirit with which we say it
 - 1. We've all been told no by someone and walked away annoyed
 - 2. And we've been told no, and felt a joyful connection even as we don't get our way
 - 3. The difference is often the way that person cared for us and respected us. If that person is filled with love and integrity from the Lord we will have a much easier time responding with the same
- XI. So in that sense the real task of helping others happens less when we are with them, than it does when in our own quiet life we turn to the Lord and shun evils that stand in the way of His presence with us
- A. When we persist through prayer and forcing ourselves to do the right thing we come to love doing His will
 - B. And that love is what breaks through the roof and brings us to the Lord. And in reality brings the Lord to us.
- XII. The end of the story is not about our helping the other person. Their ultimate healing happens when they, for themselves, hear the Lord saying, "Take up your bed and walk," meaning take the principles of truth you know and live them (AE 163:7), and it sometimes requires reflecting and meditating on them (AE 137:2)
- A. Those are things a person does with the Lord by themselves, just as the friends were up on the roof when the paralytic talked to the Lord
 - B. Our job is not to fix people, much as we might like to at times
 - C. Our job is to make sure we have the Lord's love within us because we are living His truth, and then to serve others from that place of love and integrity.
 - 1. Again, we may do this when not even present with the person, perhaps by praying for them
 - D. That has the possibility of opening heaven for them, breaking through the roof
- XIII. I'll end with a quote from Isaiah 40, which illustrates many of the themes we've seen today

"To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount

up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Is 40:26-31).

- A. Lift up your eyes: See the Lord, see the truth of His Word, see His presence in the universe and the wonder of all He has created
- B. Deny the false ideas that say the Lord is not paying attention to us, or that his care for us is faulty in some way
- C. Rest in Him and His presence will lift us up on eagles wings, and from that place of love because of the Lord’s presence, we will have the ability to reach out to serve others with love, not because we are strong or powerful or loving, but because the Lord is

Mark 2:1-12 1 And again He entered Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many gathered together, insomuch that there was no longer room, not even about the door; and He spoke the Word to them. And they came to Him, bringing a paralytic, carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him on account of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was; and having dug through, they let down the cot on which the paralytic was lying.

And Jesus, seeing their faith, says to the paralytic, Child, your sins have been forgiven.

But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does He speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins except One, God?"

And Jesus, straightway knowing in His spirit that they reasoned so within themselves, said to them, "Why do you reason these things within your hearts? What is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins have been forgiven,' or to say?, 'Arise, and take up your cot, and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on the earth. He says to the paralytic, "I say to you, 'Arise, and take up your cot, and go to your house."

And immediately he arose, and taking up the cot, came out before them all, so that all were amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it so!"

TCR 392 *Charity, or Love Towards the Neighbor, and Good Deeds*

After the chapter on faith, there follows one on charity, because faith and charity are joined like truth and good; and these two are joined like light and heat in springtime. This expression is used because spiritual light, the light radiated by the sun of the spiritual world, is in essence truth. Therefore, wherever truth is to be seen in that world, it shines with a radiance in proportion to its purity. Spiritual heat, which is also radiated by that sun, is in essence good. These statements have been made because charity and faith stand in the same relationship to each other as good and truth; and charity is all the good taken together a person does to his neighbor, and faith is all the truth taken together a person thinks about God and the things that are His.

[2] Since then the truth of faith is spiritual light, and the good of charity is spiritual heat, it follows that these two stand in the same relationship as the two things in the natural world which share these names. That is to say, when they are combined everything on earth flourishes, and in the same way when charity and faith are combined everything in the human mind flourishes, the only difference being that on earth the flowering is the result of natural heat and light, while in the human mind it is the result of spiritual heat and light. This flowering, being spiritual, is wisdom and intelligence. There is too a correspondence between the two, and for this reason the human mind, in which charity is joined with faith and faith with charity, is likened in the Word to a garden; and this is the meaning of the Garden of Eden....

[3] Furthermore it should be known that unless a discussion of charity follows that of faith, it is impossible to grasp what faith is, since, as the preceding chapter stated and showed, faith without charity is no faith, and charity without faith is no charity, and it is only the Lord who gives life to them both. It was also shown that the Lord, charity and faith make one, just as do life, the will and the understanding; and if they are

separated, each of them is destroyed like a pearl collapsing into dust. Moreover charity and faith are together present in good deeds.

TCR 734 “[Heavenly joy] is the pleasure of doing something which is of service to oneself or others. This pleasure derives its essence from love, and its coming-into-being from wisdom. The pleasure of service arising from love by means of wisdom is the soul and life of all heavenly joys.”