

Sermon – February 15, 2015
Brett Foote

We bring those close to us to the feet of Christ.

Our New Testament reading comes from the Gospel of Luke Chapter 5 verses 17 through 20. That can be found on page 63 of the new testament and on the screen behind me. Read scripture. This is the word of the Lord. Father God, May I only speak Your truth, May all of our hearts and minds be tuned to hear you clearly, and may Your Son Jesus be seen as beautiful. We pray all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Inspiration Cerebral Palsy....Real Presence of Jesus Christ during communion.

To be honest, I have to offer a bit of credit to Bob for the inspiration of this Sermon. Quite a few months ago after I had first been asked to preach I was sitting on stage listening to Bob preach. He shared a story that was deeply impactful. It about a boy with Cerebral Palsy during a communion Sunday at Stacy's home church in Washington State. It came time for communion and the communion was being served at the front of the church. People were going up but this boy couldn't he was wheelchair

bound. So two of his friends wheeled him up to take communion. If you saw my face right after I heard Bob say this you might remember, but I made this face. It was one of those lightbulb moments. As Presbyterians we believe that when we take communion, the Holy Spirit brings us into the Real Presence of Christ. So spiritually speaking, we are present with our Lord and Savior when we take communion. Now back to Stacy's Church in Washington state. Those boys whether they were thinking this or not brought that boy with cerebral palsy into the very real presence of Christ. Essentially they brought him to the feet of Jesus. This got me thinking about the Luke scripture. A set of friends brought their friend to the feet of Jesus. They went as far as to lower him down through a roof to get him to Christ's feet. So many lights went off in my head. There were so many connections. It got me thinking of my life.

Show Picture

Tell stories of two friends. Chris's Story./ Tre's Story.

This is a picture of two of my best friends Chris, Tre & myself and our Italian exchange student friend Agnese Fabbiani. We were playing swamp Croquet together...Very messy. Bob's story and the new testament scripture we read made me think of two of my very best friends. I'll start

with my friend Chris. Chris and I have been friends since we were in Kindergarten. Chris's family is very intelligent. Chris's father Greg is the head of the Math Department at Bucknell University and his mother Irmgard is a research entomologist at Penn State University. All of Chris's brothers either have their Phd's or are almost there. Chris's parents are practicing Catholics, but the rest of the family are atheists including Chris. I was the token Christian friend who was anti all progressive ideas. I had a very immature and non-exercised faith for most of my life growing up with them. But as Chris and I grew up my faith evolved. Chris and I had many conversations about God. But one day we had a conversation where I shared with him that I prayed for him everyday. We talked about faith for some time. In that moment Chris shared that he had been wrestling with thoughts about God and Jesus. He admitted that there had to be a God because there were just things he couldn't explain. "I'm not so sure about Jesus though Brett....." "Seems a little improbable that a man could come back to life....I'm sure he existed but that whole resurrection thing sounds like a parlor trick. Though my parents and you seem sure. I just don't know yet. I think it makes my parents weak". A few months ago 3 of my friends including Chris, as well as Laura and I went to dinner near

Washington DC. We sat down to dinner and Chris asked me to share with everyone my weeks teaching to the students. It was as if God wanted me to just preach the Gospel to him...which I did, you better believe I took that chance. Currently Chris now works under Dr. Francis S. Collins Director of the National institute for Health & Disease, he happens to be a very outspoken believer. I believe God is setting Chris up to come to know him. God is planting those seeds.

Now on to my friend Tre. Tre and I have been friends since we were young as well. Tre's dad was an adventurer who had been on the T.V show survivor and worked for the PA state Government in Harrisburg, His mom works at a family planning center. I felt as if was the token christian for all my friends Tre also being one of them. Tre grew up Methodist, but religion wasn't really something he cared about. Living life with Tre allowed me to really share about Christ a lot with him through the years. About my Junior year in college he called me one night and we talked for quite a long time. The conversation came to abrupt stop when Tre said to me "Brett you know my life has been meaningless. I mean I've studied politics for myself...It's all about my personal gain, it's not fulfilling. But you talk about Jesus and what you are studying and the purpose of your life. It has meaning, it

seems full, there is something I'm missing." I was blown away and I was shocked I responded to him simply "Dude, it's Jesus" . Tre said "Brett I think you are right." We went on for some time...We prayed together. I truly believe that God used me in those moments to indirectly push their faith along and bring them to Jesus' feet.

There is a correlation between the story of the boy with Cerebral palsy, these instances with my friends, and this story in the Gospels. More importantly there is a correlation to all of our lives as believers. I'll show you. Re read verse You see Jesus says that after this mans friends lower him through a roof, seeing their faith, He simply says "Man, your sins are forgiven." Now this doesn't mean that because this guys friends had faith that he was forgiven, that's not what the text says and thats not how it works.

Here's how it works: In this narrative that Jesus appears in, some friends believe enough that Jesus changes lives, that he heals people. The paralyzed man believes that this Jesus can heal him too. So much, that his friends say we have to lower you through a roof and he agrees to it. Then after seeing their faith Jesus forgives the paralytics sins and eventually heals him of his infirmity. See what happens now is actually very similar to

what happened then. When I prayed for my friends salvation, when I lived a life before my friends that glorified Christ, it brought them to the feet of Jesus because the Holy Spirit lives inside of each and everyone us . Now we can share God's truth, we can reflect Jesus to all those whom we are around. It's not our power but the power that lives inside of us as believers. We no longer have a barrier between us and God like the leviticus scripture mentions. We can tear open the roofs in this community and bring all to Christ. John Calvin a founder of reformed theology says in his commentary on these same verses:

“As the prayers, by which we ask that God will turn unbelievers to repentance, are not without advantage, our faith is evidently of such advantage to them, that they do not arrive at salvation, till they have been made partakers of the same faith with us in an answer to our prayers.”

Calvin goes on to say that our faith indirectly inspires them to turn to our Creator. If this is true then God uses us today to do what those friends did in Luke's Gospel in both spiritual and physical ways. Remember Jesus assured us that he is with us till the end of the age in Matthew 28. You see those friends that wheeled up the boy with Cerebal Palsy did a physical act that I'm sure touched the boys life. They also did a very spiritual act. The

same thing happened with Chris and Tre. God used me in those moments to reflect Christ to them, to give them signs of the truth. To present them in prayer before the only person that can truly heal and save. Those heart to heart phone calls. The prayers. and so much more So what does that mean for us here at FPC Strasburg. Whether you are a lifelong member, or you have come off and on to this church, there is a call on us as a community of faith: To pray for those near to us and live lives that glorify God and point people to His Son. Each and every one around us needs His forgiveness and healing. God is going to work through us to do great things in the lives around us. My friends, your friends, our community, this church will lay all people down at the feet of Christ to be forgiven and healed just like the friends did in Luke scripture. Will you pray with me? Lord God will you heal those around us. Would you use Your Holy Spirit to convict us to pray and serve all of those around us so that we may bring all this around us to the feet of Christ. We love you God, thanks for loving us first. Amen.

