

Infrastructure of Blessing pt. 3

-Flint Infrastructure Problem:

-in 2014 the cash strapped city of Flint michigan changed its water source from Detroit municipal, to the Flint River
-until that point they had never water quality problem

-here is essentially what happened: the water in the Flint river happened to be more Corrosive Than the Detroit Municipal water
-this more corrosive water dissolved protective coatings inside the Old Lead Pipes that made up the Flint water system

-with the protective layer gone the water flowing through the pipes now absorbed some of the lead from the pipes
-they eventually found out the water was tainted and changed supplies,, but the damage was done

-Now NO MATTER HOW GOOD THE WATER going into the system is,,,, it will come out tainted by lead

-And the water is currently good going into this Infrastructure of Pipes,,,, but while it is contained in there it is being tainted,,, poisoned ,, ruined.

-in so many ways infrastructure is crucial

-What if we are part of the crucial infrastructure God uses to deliver living water to people all around us?

-what if your life is the conduit for the spiritual equivalent of water,,, what if you are the Infrastructure connecting God to spiritually thirsty people....

-Luke 5:17-26 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 **Some men came carrying** a paralyzed man on a mat and **tried to take him** into the house to **lay him before Jesus**. 19 When they **could not find a way** to do this because of the crowd, they **went up on the roof** and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When **Jesus saw THEIR faith**, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 **Everyone was amazed** and gave praise to God. They were **filled with**

awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

- Point out a couple things:
 - these 4 friends drove this encounter (*they were pushing it*)
 - they didn't know what to do, they just were trying to get him to Jesus
 - they kept at it....
 - Jesus was MOVED by **THEIR FAITH**
- this situation blessed more than just the man healed
 - EVERYBODY** in attendance had a life changing moment with God
 - in fact what they did is still impacting us today in this room.....*

What must it have been like to be one of those 4 friends?

-It would have been amazing to be healed, but what about those who's efforts actually made the healing happen?

- stop and think about the conversation walking home
- what probably happened ANYTIME SOMEONE IN NEED from then on?.....

-Imagine knowing your faith and action changed a life forever. And imagine seeing the evidence of it right in front of your face.

-Now take a moment and think of some people you know who may be "on the mat" in some area of their life.

- that friend who's marriage or kids are struggling
- that family member who is fighting the battle in their health
- that person who is struggling with Depression and Hopelessness
- that person who battles with persistent Loneliness

-If you could be 100% sure that God would work in response to your faith, what would it look like to carry that person on their mat to Jesus?

-Imagine reaching the end of all things and finding a long list of the people and the ways that you carried their mats.

- imagine seeing that there are 5 people in heaven who would not have been
- imagine seeing the marriages that were healed and the kids who got to grow up in a healthy family because we carried a mat
- image seeing that your friendship and generosity was a bright spot of hope for a person who otherwise was alone....
- some of you foster children.... Imagine seeing the game film some day of where those kids would have ended up without you carrying their mat,,, and then knowing where they did end up

-So how do we make that list more than imagination?

Build friendships based on Generosity and Compassion.

Illustration: "Teaming up Older Students and newer students in youth ministry"

- years ago we recognized a need and created a new initiative
- we had a lot of Juniors and Seniors who loved coming because there were so many in their age group at the church

-but younger kids were intimidated

- so we assigned what was essentially Big Brothers and Sisters
- these older students were volunteering to be a part of friendships that completely served the agenda of their younger counterparts
 - they were not drawn to younger annoying middle schoolers
 - they didn't actually feel like offering rides home from stuff
 - they were not texting that kid for their own benefit
- these friendships were Motivated by Generosity and Compassion
- for the Older Students these friendships were all about what they could OFFER

-1 Corinthians 10:24 No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

-on a really basic level this is the first reason those 4 friends were used by God
-this whole thing was about what was good for someone else

-It is so easy to come to the church each Sunday and see the same people you know, the same people you always talk to,,,,, and to spend most of your time around those people,,,,,

- that interaction is more comfortable and Reciprocal.
- you are getting as much out as you are putting in

-but to see someone we don't know and spend time and attention there,,,,, to help someone else BE COMFORTABLE, even if it makes us uncomfortable,,,,, that is Generosity and Compassion

-We all need to be the recipient in some friendships, but God plans for you to be just as much of a Giver.

- Illustration: Have 10 People hold hands and Move toward a goal

-no one person in this chain can move very far without it benefiting everyone

-The first real key to being a person who Carries Mats is that we must consistently build and build up **relationships that benefit others.**

- make sure this chain doesn't end with you being pulled
- be sure that when this chain pulls you closer to Jesus, that there are people connected to you who will benefit from your movement

-Purposely build relationships that benefit others.

While holding on to others, we need to make steps toward Jesus.

--hebrews 10: 22-25 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 **And** let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

-According to the writer of Hebrews your continued growth and effort is critical.

- stay closely attached to the beauty of the gospel
- keep a sincere heart. (*make sure your actions match what you say you believe*)
- hold unswervingly to truth
- pursue God's presence with Passion

-You can't help others move toward Jesus if you aren't moving toward him.

-I am not asking if you are a Christian, or going to heaven, or if you attend church

-I am asking if you are ACTIVELY DRAWING NEARER TO GOD

-PARENTS HEAR THIS: you will model for your kids a hunger and pace in your pursuit of Jesus

- *growing people reproduce growing people; plateaued people produce plateaued people*

-As we are growing we ask the question: How can what God is doing in me benefit others?

- consider how we might spur one another on
- how can I be an encouragement for others to keep going
- How can I FAN THE FLAME OF OTHERS

-According to the writer it starts simply with being with people.

- dont give up meeting together
- baked into this statement is that ASSUMPTION: they are meeting together but it may not be for my benefit,,, I would be tempted to give something up because I don't need it,,, but he challenges them to share life with others so that they CAN Spur each other on.
- have close contact with others even if it is just for their benefit

-The other thing specifically mentioned is Encouragement.

- speak into and reinforce good things
- so much of my role as a leader is listening to people to find out *where they are getting it right,,, then I praise that and encourage more of it.*

-Encouragement is such a powerful tool.....

-encouragement is like when you start a tiny fire,,,, and its barely hanging on ,, you blow and fan it

-if you do it right that tiny little ember and turn into a roaring fire

-Friendship and closeness are needed for us to have clarity about what merits encouragement in others.

-that same closeness is what makes our Encouragement valuable to people

When you are Faithful as an Encourager people allow you to be a Carrier.

-The fruit your life produces and the love you have for people will put you in position to Carry people when they fall.

-Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

-Whether it is due to sin or just challenges of life people occasionally fall down and things occasionally fall on people.

-hardship. -crisis. -failure. -disease. -tragedy

-These situations are more common than we tend to know.

-most people hide hurt from the watching world

-only a select few, are allowed **to see** behind the curtain

-It breaks my heart to think in room this size how many of us may have serious burdens that we bear ALONE.

-there is no short cut to being let in on this stuff

-we earn our way in through Friendship and Faithful Encouragement

-When you have been allowed to see a burden, recognize the sacred opportunity being extended.

-in most cases if someone is letting you see the burden that is significant

-dont miss it

-Question: is this "above and beyond type stuff?"

-Being a Mat Carrier is not "going above and beyond". Hebrews told us that doing this fulfills law of Christ. *(love one another as I have loved you)*

-Jesus made your burden and my burden,,,,, HIS BURDEN

-to follow him is to make the burdens of others Ours
-this isn't above and beyond stuff,,,,, this is Jesus 101

-It was Jesus' relationship with God the Father and his love for us that bridged the gap between us and God.

-It will be our growing love for God and our compassionate love for people that will bridge the gap between them and God.

The final key to being a Mat Carrier is having enough Confidence IN GOD for you to act.

-We have felt the tug of need and opportunity before:

- seen the friend sinking into depression
- seen the person being swallowed by addiction
- maybe you have even had people say things to you that you know was probably an invitation for to ask a further question, or say something more
- maybe someone has come out and said "i am just so tired of living like this, I wish things would change"

-But we are often afraid, because we don't think we have anything to offer.

—We feel insufficient to address the Issues people have.

*-let me settle this for you,,,,, **you are insufficient** ,,,, so am I ,,,, so is Jason,,, Patrick.*

-but you know who else was Insufficient ? Those 4 dudes.....

-when they picked up that mat, they didn't have a plan for how to fix him.....

—they were not the solution, they just had to connect him to the solution

-All they did was get the guy to Jesus, and Jesus did the rest.

-2 Corinthians 4:6-7 For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

-If someone is letting you see their pain, then maybe it is because they see in you what you don't see in yourself.

- they are catching a glimpse of the Light inside you
- this is the same light the Illuminated the Universe so long ago
- God has deposited bits of it in you

-When you recognize that you are Insufficient for the problems people have, you are confirming what that verse says, "*our great power is from God **not ourselves***"

-When we have a PROPER AWE and REVERENCE for what RESIDES IN us, we will engage with hurting people,, and try to let it out.

-God's power channeled through you will lift people off mats and make them whole
-the 4 friends were "in and of themselves" so insufficient and insignificant that we are not even told their names,,,,, yet look at what happened!

-Practical Tips:

-When people are On the Mat:

-Displays of Love and Friendship go a long way

-Ask questions, then Ask Questions, then Ask more questions, Do a lot of praying MAYBE THEN offer advice.

-seriously questions to advice ratio should be at least 20-1

-and you should have spent considerable time in prayer for days for weeks before ever telling someone what you think

-Eventually God will LEAD YOU,,, the Holy Spirit will give you a thought, something to say,,, something to do

-When you do it, remember,,, you are just picking up and carrying,, ,Jesus does the rest.

-Closing

-People all around you have friendships that are like those Lead Pipes in Flint Michigan

-the stuff flowing into their lives from their friends is tainted and sickening

-but you have the opportunity to be a Source of Life Giving Spiritual Water.

-no pressure because it is not your power or intelligence

-Draw as close to God as you can and Love people and continue to draw as many people as close as you can,,,,,

-You will be the connecting point of HIS life giving power and those people who need it most.

-Return the 10 people who walk in a chain.

-this time ask everyone connected to them to come grab onto the chain

-now move the mob forward....