

# HEALING THE PARALYTIC

Jason Gaston | Sermon Transcript

Well, welcome everybody to the Summit Church. I hope that everybody had an incredible Thanksgiving. I can already sense it across all the campuses, you're thinking right now in your head, the one, the one weekend that I bring somebody to the Summit, my family members, to come to hear Pastor J.D. I get this tall goober on the stage, right? Well that's right, I'm the tall goober. My name is Jason Gaston, and I am the family ministries pastor here at the Summit Church. It's an honor and a joy for me to stand before you today and to open up God's Word.

I hope that everybody had a great Thanksgiving. Thank goodness Thanksgiving is over. Man, I think I ate about six pans of Sister Schubert rolls. Everybody, you know what I'm talking about right? Those things are like God himself came down and gave us that manna. Okay, those things are glorious. Filled up on all the great food, but man, it's Christmastime, okay. It's Christmas season.

Some of y'all, Thanksgiving never started because you're Christmas fiends. At the first sign of cold air, you were putting stockings up. You were downloading and listening to your favorite Pandora or Spotify station with Christmas music in September. Y'all need to stop that. All right, you need to stop that, that's just crazy talk, okay?

But some of y'all, this weekend, listen, this is the first weekend in the Advent season, where we begin to start focusing our hearts and our minds on the coming of Christ. Man, it's a busy season for a lot of us. Maybe this weekend was the weekend that you got in your attic. You pulled down all that stuff, because you know what time it is. It's time to decorate your house, right? It's time to decorate your house. Time to get the stockings out, get the lights out.

You plug the lights in, after you've spent 45 minutes trying to untangle them. You could have sworn that last year when you put them up, they were nicely rolled together, but somehow over the course of the year, in the attic, untouched, they got tangled, right? Somehow that happened. I don't know how that happened, but it happened. Then you plug it in, and half your lights don't work, so you do what every good human being does, you throw it in the trashcan, and you go buy some more, right? That's what everybody does. It's how you roll.

Man, and this season is a busy season, is it not? I mean, it's a busy season. Christmas season is a season where you start to think about all kinds of things. You think about all the Christmas parties, from your business, from your company. You start to think all the people you want to host. You start to think about your Christmas cards. The Christmas, oh no, the Christmas card, forgot about our family picture. Then you're like, well we'll just dig into one of our family pictures from this past year. Then you realize, we haven't taken family photos in six years, so you're sending out a Christmas card with one child missing in it, okay, because you've added somebody over those years.

It's just, it's chaotic. It's stressful. You're wondering, have you bought enough gifts for all the people in your family? Did you remember your mom and your dad? You're like, who knows how to buy presents for a dad? Nobody knows how to buy presents for a dad, so you get him a gift card, right? All of a sudden Christmas has turned into chaos. It's during the Christmas season where we start to feel a little bit of the busyness, starts to become a burden to us.

What I want for us today, as we gather here across all of our campuses, what I want for us today is, I want us to look at the busyness of Christmas, and I want us to begin to flip it a little bit on its head. I want us to look at Christmas as not just a burden, but a beautiful opportunity that's in front of each and every single one of us. I believe wholeheartedly that the Christmas season presents to us a very specific opportunity. It's specific to the believer in that it offers you the opportunity to invite someone to hear the gospel, that might not normally do so.

Research tells us that the Christmas season is one of the two times of the year when someone that normally doesn't even think about stepping foot in a church, they think, "Man, you know what, maybe this is the time. Maybe this is the time that I'll go." Maybe that's how you started walking with Christ. Maybe you stepped foot in a church for the first time, during Christmas or Easter, but you took that step.

What I'm hoping that we would begin to do today, is that we would begin to unpack, and we would begin to look at this idea of one person in our life, that doesn't know Christ, that we would begin to go fishing for them.

As I was preparing for this message, Pastor J.D. said something, a couple weeks ago, that really started to weigh heavy on my heart. It's this idea that, man, we're really passionate about movements, are we not? Especially the millennial generation, we love this idea of big, grand things happening all around us. We love to be a part of something great. We love to be part of a church that's doing great things for the kingdom of God, yet somehow we've missed our part in it. It's really easy for us to just say we're a part of something great, but now to actually use our gifting, to be a part of that movement.

Yesterday, my son, Holt, who's 6 years old, he grabs my daughter, Annie, he says, "Get your pom poms, I want you to come in the backyard with me. I'm going to play some football, and I want you to be my cheerleader."

She's like, "Okay." I'm like, he is so sexist, you know? She can play football. She could probably rip his head off.

I look out the back window, and there's Annie with her pink pom poms. She's got on a tutu, and she's cheering for Holt. She's like, "Go Bubba, go Bubba," cheering. He's throwing the football to himself, diving, catching, rolling 10 yards into the end zone. He stands up, spikes the ball, and he's like, "It's good."

She's just cheering. She comes inside, she said, "Dad, did you see me and Holt playing football?"

I said, "Sweetie, Holt played football. You just cheered."

What I'm afraid of is that a lot of us, we've become really good cheerleaders, but not good contributors to the mission of God. We're really good at standing on the sidelines, throwing up our pom poms and cheering, while everybody else is hard at work on the frontlines. What I'm hoping today is that we would stop being cheerleaders, and we would start becoming contributors to a great movement of the mission of God, right here in Raleigh Durham. Listen, it doesn't start with the masses. It starts with one. It starts with one. It starts with one person.

The Gospel of Luke, chapter five, if you have your Bibles, if you would go ahead and open up to the Gospel of Luke, chapter five, verse 17. What I'm hoping today is that, we would begin to read this passage and that the Holy Spirit would begin to put on our hearts a desire, a longing, a passion, for the one. Luke five, verse 17, "One day as he, Jesus, was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who had come from every village of Galilee, in from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there."

Now if you read the New Testament, you'll notice as Jesus is going around from place to place, this is in the beginning stages of His ministry. As He goes around from place to place, He constantly has encounters with teachers of the Law, and Pharisees. These are religious leaders of the day. These are people that Jesus came, and most of His teachings went completely against them. They had put unnecessary weight on the people of God, on God's people, for salvation. Jesus comes and He pits Himself against them, and He says, "This is actually the way of salvation."

The power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick. Some men were carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into a house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this, because of the crowd, they went up on a roof, and they lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to them, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

Now the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow that speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Now that's a question that comes up constantly in the New Testament. Who is this man?

Who is Jesus? Even Jesus Himself asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am? Who do you say that I am?" It's one of the most important questions that every human being on the face of the planet will ever have to wrestle with, who is Jesus? Jesus Himself stood up in a boat, when the waves were going, and the storms were raging. What does He do? He stands up in the boat, rebukes the waves. He tells them to be still, and it happens. The men in the boat look at each other, and they say, "Who is this man, that when He speaks, creation listens, creation obeys?" Well He's God. Only God can speak and creation obeys at His very voice. It's a question that every single person on the planet will have to wrestle with, who is Jesus? Who is He?

Jesus knew what they were thinking, and He asked ... I love this. Jesus, He knows the thoughts of people. He's playing like Jedi mind tricks on people. He's like, I know what you're thinking, all right. So, I'm just going to go ahead and tell you. He said, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say? Your sins are forgiven, or say, get up and walk? But you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up. Take your mat, and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, and he took what he had been lying on, and he went home praising God.

Everyone was amazed, and they gave praise to God. They were filled with awe, and they said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Now a few things I want us to see, as we begin to set our hearts on this Christmas season, on the one, that we are going to pull out of this passage.

Number one, these men, that brought the paralyzed man before the feet of Jesus, they had a mission. They had a mission.

Mission helps define us, does it not? It gives us direction. Mission gives us direction in our families. It gives us direction in our life. It gives us direction in our culture. It gives us direction in our businesses, right? Some of you, some of your families, man, you guys are like all conference families. You're the best of the best. You have a family mission statement, all right.

Not only do you have a family mission statement, you got somebody, maybe in your family, or one of your really good friends, to cut off some pallet wood and put it together. You had somebody really artsy draw your family mission statement on there, right? It is like the centerpiece of your home. It fits right above your fireplace. Every day you walk in there and you're like, our family does hugs. We laugh. We cry. You got all these things that define your family.

If my family had a family mission statement pinned up in our house in an artistic manner, it would be, I took a cardboard box. I ripped it in half, and I used spray paint on it, because I don't have a lick of artistic ability, okay. That's just my family.

Mission defines us. It gives us direction. Think about this for your company. Think about it for your business. If you are working in your job, and you start to go outside of the mission that has been defined for your organization, what does your boss do? What does your supervisor do? They start to reel you back in. They start to give you, right, they start to remind you of the mission and the vision of the company, of the organization. They say, these things you're pursuing, they might be good things. If you want to pursue those things, you might want to go start your own company, because that's not who we are.

Instagram, some of you all thought, Instagram was just an app on your phone. It's an organization. It's a company. This is what their mission statement is, "To capture and share the world's moments." Some of y'all, this past week, you did that at Thanksgiving. You pulled out your phone on Instagram, and you took a picture of that turkey. You thought, a deep-fried turkey, everybody needs to see this, because this is the turkey that God eats, right here, deep-fried goodness. You take a picture of it, and you share it with the world. What are you doing? You're doing exactly what Instagram wants you to do. They want you to capture your life's moments, and they want you to share it with the world. That's their mission. It's who they are.

Facebook, Facebook has a mission. It's a media platform for your grandma to keep up with all of her grandchildren, right? You all, seriously, I remember the day that my grandma tried to be my friend on Facebook. I was like, "Grandma, really? No, come on man, Grandma doesn't even know. She hunts and pecks on the thing. She doesn't even know how to type man. That can't be happening."

Here's a little side note for you. Parents, grandparents, the day you asked your children or grandchildren to be friends on Facebook, they left. They left Facebook. They got on Instagram, so you might want to go over to Instagram, okay, that's where they are.

Jesus, listen, Jesus Himself had a mission statement, did He not? The Gospel of Luke, chapter 19, verse 10 says this, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." What was the defining mission for the men in this passage? The men that brought the paralyzed man before Jesus, what was their defining mission? What was their vision? What was the thing that they were hoping for? I would say it was ... and they had a friend. Somebody they knew. Maybe somebody they just passed. They had a friend that they wanted to see walk, and it drove them.

It moved them. Let me ask you. Let me just ask you a very simple question today. What drives you? What pushes you? What moves you forward in life? Is it to have a good job? Is it to have early retirement? Is it so you can maybe leave a good inheritance to your children?

Listen, those are all good things. Those are all good things, and those are things that God enjoys you to have. That you would have a job that provides for you, and you provide for your family. And that you would be able to provide for your family for generations to come, but let me ask you, maybe in a different category. What things, spiritually speaking, drive you?

What kingdom dreams do you have? What things in your life are you thinking about? And you're dreaming about that are moving you in such a way that you're not just living for the moment, but you're living for eternity? That you're saying to yourself, God, if this doesn't happen, I don't know if I could take another step. What are the things in your life that are welling up inside of you for eternity's sake that are driving you and pushing you forward, parents?

Is it that your children would come to faith in Christ? Because if that's the case, you know what's gonna happen as a mom or a dad? You know what we're gonna do then, right? We're gonna work hard every single day to see our children grasp the beauty of the gospel. Every day we're gonna work hard at it. We're gonna work hard at it. Why? Because that mission is defining us. It's putting it out there.

Jim Cymbala, he pastors a church called Brooklyn Tabernacle. Okay? The guy played college basketball at two different universities. The University of Rhode Island and the Naval Academy. When you think about a college athlete, someone who's made it to that level, they have a drive. Do they not? These people are athletes. They're driven, and you think that their drive is only focused on an athletic ability.

One of the things about Jim Cymbala is when he got to college, he sensed that God was calling him to ministry, and a little bit later he penned in one of his books, he wrote a statement that said this is actually the defining mission of my life. This is something that I've yearning and longing and desiring for. This is what he said. He said, "I despaired at the thought I might let my life slip by without God showing Himself mightily on my behalf."

Mission. Vision. You know, Aristotle ... Y'all didn't think a red neck from Apex knew about Aristotle. Right? Okay. Aristotle. Aristotle says the soul never thinks without a picture. The soul never thinks without a picture. Listen, there is a picture being painted for you in your life right now, and you might not even know it.

There's a picture that's driving you. There's a vision that moves you. There's a mission that defines you. One pastor said, "If the size of your vision doesn't intimidate you, it's probably insulting to God."

What is driving you for the kingdom? What is it? Who is it? Who is that person? In this passage, these men, the driving force for their motivation, was that the lame would walk. As a disciple of Christ, I would even say to all of us, if we're looking for a mission for our life, why not take on the mission of Jesus Himself? That God would use us. That the lost might be found. That God would use me as an ambassador of the gospel, that those that are far away might come to faith in Christ.

But listen, these men didn't just have a mission. They had an eager expectation. They had an eager expectation, did they not? They didn't just go like, "Oh, man. We got a mission. Sounds great." They're like, "No, that mission moved me." They're ... Okay, listen. They're expectation with this, maybe, just maybe, if we could get our friend at the feet of Jesus, maybe Jesus can do what only Jesus can do.

Maybe. When I think about that, I think about risk. Risk. I think about taking a chance, taking a dare on God, literally. I think about men of the Old Testament, like Joshua. Joshua chapter one, Moses. Okay, Moses has gone now in the baton of leadership over the people of Israel's been handed off to a man by the name of Joshua. Joshua now is in charge of leading God's people into the promises and fulfillment of God's promise to His people that they would go into the Promised Land, and it's Joshua's job to do it.

In Joshua chapter one, verse eight, the Lord looks at Joshua, and He says this, "You are going to have to be strong and courageous. You're gonna have to be very strong and courageous." Translated meaning this. You're gonna have to take a dare on me at some point, Joshua, if we're gonna get the people to this place.

What do you know about Joshua's leadership? Well, God gave Joshua a task. They were gonna go to battle against a city, Jericho, and Jericho was a little wimpy city, right? It had a little tiny wall built around it? No, it was fortified. It was built up. It was hard to get into. So God gave them an epic battle plan. March around it, and on the last day the trumpet sounds. And what are you gonna

do? You're gonna scream. No hand grenades. No bazookas. No tanks. None of that. Nope. Just scream. So what are we gonna do? We're gonna scream because God told us to do. Screaming is not a great battle plan.

But they do it. The walls come down. What do you know a couple chapters later? They're at war, and if they're going to be successful at this war, God's gonna have to do something. So they literally ask God to make the sun stay in its place. To finish what God started, and what does God do? He answers. I think about guys like Elijah on Mt. Carmel. One prophet against all the false prophets of the land. He tells them to bring their sacrifice up to the alter, and the God who answers and consumes the sacrifice, that's the God.

And so these men, they get their sacrifice around. They start doing like an Indian rain dance. They're going around, and Elijah's mocking them. It's like, "Shout louder. Maybe your god's on vacation. You know, maybe he's busy. Maybe he's out for a walk." And they keep doing it, and they're like cutting themselves. It's actually a really depressing story.

And so Elijah's like, "Move over. Let me show you guys something. Take the sacrifice. Put it on the alter. Douse it with water. In fact, we're gonna fill it up. We're gonna just soak it. Completely soak it. Water's gonna be overflowing from everything around it." He gets on his knees, and he says, "God, I want You today to show off Your glory. Me versus all these men, but You're the one doing the work. Do it."

What does God do? Whoosh. What do the people do? Fall on their faces and say, "The Lord, surely, he is God."

I think about guys like, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Right? Daniel chapter three. They refused to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar and his statue that he had put out there for the people to bow to because their hearts were aligned and the affections of their heart were for the one true God only.

In Daniel chapter three, Nebuchadnezzar hears about it, and he comes over. And he says, "What's this I hear about you guys not bowing?"

They say, "Listen, we will not bow to you. We will not bow our hearts to you."

And King Nebuchadnezzar, he says, "Listen, if you don't bow to me, I'm gonna throw you into the fiery furnace. There you will die. Flames will consume you."

And they look at him, and they say, "Listen, we refuse to bow to you because our hearts are for God alone. We believe our God can save us." That's pretty strong faith, isn't it? But here's the best part about that. The next statement in Daniel three. "But even if He doesn't, even if He doesn't save us, we still refuse to bow."

Hebrews chapter 10, verse 39 says, "We're not like those that shrink back and are destroyed, but we're like those who press forward. And we move forward in faith." And in Hebrews chapter 11, what do you see? The great hall of faith, right? People who saw God shut the mouths of lions, and they did all kinds of crazy things, but you know what some people did in faith? They moved forward, and they were sawed in two. But the reward was all the same. They all stepped out in faith. They took a risk.

When was the last time you took a risk on God? When was the last time you stepped out in faith? You know the guys in this passage, man, they had an eager expectation that their friend would walk, but they just had a hunch. They were like maybe, maybe Jesus can do it. As believers, listen, we've got more than a hunch. We have a hope that Jesus is who He says He is, and He can do what only He can do. Does that expectation, does the eagerness in your heart, does it drive you forward, and does it move you to action?

Because listen, if it's just a doctrine in your head, if the truths of God are just here, and they never make their way here, you're not really following Christ. You're just being consumed with information. The gospel transforms the mind. It transforms the heart, and it propels the feet.

The gospel moves us forward, and the kingdom moves us forward. We're not just cheerleaders. We're competitors, and we get on there. And we contribute to the kingdom of God going forward, but they also encountered an obstacle. Now we all encounter

obstacles, right? I mean, this is like, for me, this is the defining characteristic of my life. Like when I think about the one, like that one person. I'm like every time I go to that one person, I feel like there's always something in the way.

At this point in the story, the men try to bring their paralyzed friend that they're carrying on the mat. They try to bring him before Jesus, but what do they know about the door? It's crowded. They can't get in. Okay, it's at this point, if you're anything like me, it's at this point we throw up the white flag and surrender. We're like, "Oh, Lord. Lord Jesus. Must be a closed door." We start speaking Christianese, right? We're like, "I guess the Lord doesn't want this to happen. So maybe we just need to go a different way and forget about it. Not do it anymore."

Listen, for most of us, an open door is just Christianese for the path of least resistance. Open door terminology for most of us is, "Lord, we'll walk through that open door because it seems easy." Okay, just think about this in reality. Imagine if the Apostle Paul only walked through open doors according to our definition.

Half the New Testament wouldn't have been written. Flogged, beaten, thrown in prison, ship wrecked. Sound like an open door? Paul, Paul, don't go to Rome, Paul. You go to Rome, guess what's gonna happen? They're gonna kill you. Yeah, I know. I know that's what you're saying. That's probably what's gonna happen, but you know what? I'm gonna go anyway.

Listen, sometimes where there's a closed door, you need to dig a hole in the roof. Sometimes you need to improvise and find another way to get someone to the feet of Jesus. Sometimes you gotta kick the door open and not just give up and throw your white flag up in the air and say, "Oh, must be a closed door. We should just go about our merry way."

You know, several years ago, about almost 10 years ago now, I applied for a job, and it came down to me and one other guy. Anybody ever been there? Anybody ever been there? Okay. Me and one other guy, and I got the phone call. The phone call was, we decided to go with the other guy, which is the equivalent of a girl telling a guy, I just want to be friends. Okay?

Man, I felt like ... I was like all right, man. Okay, great. I'm gonna go about my way. So found another job, was working at that place for a couple years, and I'd heard about a little transition that was going on at this place. So I was like I'm just gonna shoot an email and try to see. God had put on me this burden to align myself with this one place, and so I was like man, I really wanna be there. So in a non-annoying way, I hope, maybe it was annoying, I don't know, I just started shooting some emails. I'm like, "Hey, how you doing? Hope things are going well. Whatever. Man, I heard you got some transition going on."

What most of us saw as a closed door, I started just to tap on it a little bit. Just kick it open a little bit. Just started to push a little bit. Just push a little bit. Push a little bit, and then finally, I find myself sitting down in an interview, face-to-face with this guy, and he said, "Listen, here's the deal. We're ready to offer you a job, but here's the kicker. It's an internship." Okay, at that point my heart sank 'cause everybody knows interns lose money. They don't make money. They lose it in gas. That's just the reality, okay?

I had a full-time job. I was making money. Life was great. Life was great, but man God had really put on our hearts to come to this place. It felt like the door was closing again, but God was telling us, you gotta kick that thing open. Kick it open, and keep going. So my wife and I took the job. We took the job on a risk. We took a risk. Left a full-time paying job.

She was working full time. Came up here. She didn't have any connections. I was making intern money with no promises that it would be full time. You know what that place was? The Summit Church. The Summit Church. I had felt like God had put on my heart a desire to align my life with the mission and vision of this place, and I was willing to do whatever it took. I was willing to dig a hole through the roof if it meant that.

Listen, you are going to encounter obstacles in the way when you're trying to share Jesus with the one. Don't throw up your white flag and surrender because there's an obstacle there. Dig a hole in the roof. Dig a hole in the roof, and do whatever it takes. Don't be afraid of the ridicule.

Don't be afraid of the repercussions that you'll get relationally. You're not sure. Listen, how do I know that? Because we talked about this in my small group this past week. Man, what will happen if I start sharing Christ with this guy? Is he going to like me anymore? Just share Christ. Kick the door open. Go for it.

But here's the last thing. These guys got more than they bargained for. These guys in this passage, they got way more than they bargained for. Verse 25 says this: Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say? Your sins are forgiven or to say get up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on Earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home."

That's what they were hoping for, right? That their friend would walk. Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on, and went home praising God. Listen that's a story that we hear, we're like, "Oh, that's cute." That's crazy. A paralyzed man just stood up and walked. That's what they were hoping for, but everyone was amazed, and they gave praise to God.

Here's the beauty. Here's the ... Don't miss this verse. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Not awe like I walked into the state fair and paid a quarter to see the world's smallest woman. Okay? That's not like that, oh. This is like I'm filled with awe and wonder because we saw God do what only God could do at this place today. Listen, don't settle for the mundane when Jesus offers the miraculous.

Don't settle for the mundane, everyday life of Christmas this season. Ask God to do what only God can do in the life of the one. The beautiful thing about this passage is this. I love the order that takes place here, and it's true of Jesus in all of His ministry. These guys thought their friend needed to walk. The external circumstance was the most important thing. What Jesus looked at was the man's internal posture. What did He say first to them? "Son, friend, your sins are forgiven. And then, "Take up your mat and walk." Listen, the most, the greatest need that you and I have, the greatest need that the one has, the greatest need is not an external tweaking. I am tired of external tweaking in my life. I don't need an external tweak. I need a heart change. I need my soul crushed, so God can mold me back up into who God wants me to be. God's not after a tweaked life. He's after a changed life. The inner disposition is the most important piece of this whole passage, not the external circumstance. And Jesus does the greatest work there. That's where Jesus does the greatest work, in the heart.

At some point, you and I were the paralytic on the mat. We were. We were the ones ... You know what? You actually may be the paralytic on the mat, and today you realized for the first time, "Oh, my gosh. My friend keeps inviting me to church because he or she thinks that I need Jesus." That's exactly right. That's why your friends are doing that. They want to offer you the greatest hope. Not a message of hope. The only hope—that is Christ. They want you to see and to taste, to know that the Lord is good. But at some point, we were all the paralytic on the mat, and someone in your life, someone ... We can all trace a finger to someone. Someone looked at you and they said, "My mission is to see that person come to faith in Christ." And they were eager and expectant that God could do what only God can do in your life. And you know what? If they're anything like the people that tried to see me come to faith in Christ, they've probably encountered a lot of obstacles. Your pride, circumstances in your life, things in the way. You didn't want anything to do with it, but they kept persisting. They kept ... When the door was shut, they dug a hole through the roof.

Who's your one? Is it a parent? Is it a friend? Is it a child? Jesus told His disciples if they were going to follow Him, He would give them a new task. He'd given them a new mission. He'd give them a new direction. It was going to be one of the defining characteristics of every believer. And you know what that was? Jesus looked at His disciples, and He says, "Follow Me from the current state that you're in. Follow Me, and I'm going to make you fishers of men." What He's saying is, you've been fishing here for a long time. I'm getting ready to show you something greater. And it's people. And it's life transformation in the lives of people. I would say it's time for us to get off the sideline and stop cheering and start fishing. Start moving the ball down the court.

A couple years ago, a friend of mine recommended a book to me called *People Sharing Jesus* by a guy name of Darrell Robinson. And he had a story in it that completely wrecked me. I mean, it just tore me up, man. It really brought some conviction in my life, and I actually just want to close out today, I want to close out by reading that story to you.

"Now, it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around, and in fact the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry. Week after week, month after month and year after year, those who call themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish and how they might go about the task of fishing. Year after year, they carefully defined what fishing means, they defended fishing as an occupation and they declared that fishing is always to be the primary task of a fisherman.

“Continually, they searched for new and better methods of fishing, for new and better definitions of fishing. They created witty slogans and displayed them on big, beautiful banners. These fishermen built large beautiful buildings called fishing headquarters, and the plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish, but the one thing they didn’t do, they did not fish. In addition to meeting regularly, they organized the board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. They hired staff and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, defend fishing and decide what new streams should be thought about, but the staff and committee members didn’t fish. Large, elaborate, expensive training centers were built whose original and primary purpose was to teach fisherman how to fish.

“Over the years, courses were offered in the needs of fish, the nature of fish, where to find fish, the reactions of fish and how to approach and feed fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training, many were graduated and were given the fishing license that they were hoping for. They were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters which were filled with many fish. Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and prayed over and sent to fish, but like the fishermen back home, they never fished.

“They engaged in all kinds of other occupations. Some felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way, so the fish would know the difference between a good and a bad fisherman. Others felt that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were were surely enough. Now, it’s true that many fishermen sacrificed. They put up with all kinds of difficulties and some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every single day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen, yet they never fished. Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who don’t fish were really not fisherman at all. No matter how much they claimed to be, yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if, year after year, he never finishes. Or more plainly stated, is one really following if he isn’t fishing?”

Listen, Summit. It’s time to start casting your nets. It’s time to start fishing. It’s time to stop talking about fishing, and it’s time to start. And fishing starts with one. Who’s your one? Who’s the one person that you want to see God do in them what only God can do?

Let’s pray. Father God, we give you thanks that when we were the paralytic on the mat, You looked at us, not in our external state, but You looked at our hearts, and You said, “I forgive you.” God, we know that that is the greatest need of every person that ever walked the planet—forgiveness of sins. Father, today, if there’s anyone in this place across all of our campuses, Lord, I pray that they would not be after the external tweaks of their life, but that they would see that You are after their heart, and they would confess with their mouth, “Jesus is Lord.”

They know that their sin has separated them, and they need Your grace. God, I pray that would be true of them today. Father, we thank You that even though we were once the paralytic, You looked at us in our state, You said, “Get up and walk.” Just as we have received Your grace, God, help us now to extend that to someone else. God, put on our hearts a desire for the one, that one person this Christmas season that we would see come to faith in Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.