

Thanks, Jeff. Good morning, everybody. So glad that you are here this morning as we are continuing our series Block Party. So when Amber and I first moved to Bloomington, we started hearing people talking about this musician that, honestly, I just. I'd never heard of before.

I didn't even know if I'd heard any of his music before. It's a guy named Ben Rector. Some of you know him. I have since come to know him because I found everywhere I went, people were talking about Ben Rector. And I thought that, like, he was a guy that maybe grew up in Bloomington, because the way that people were talking about him, it's as if they knew him personally.

It's like they went to high school with him, played basketball with him or something like that. But they were just like, they loved his music so much that they just knew all of these things about him and all of his songs. And so I was like, man, I should probably check this guy out and get to. Get to know him. And then some friends invited us to go see a concert.

If it ever wise, if you've been up there kind of in Indy, amazing place to see a show. And so started listening to his music. Music and would listen to one album and then listen to it again and then listen to another album, listen to that again. And now it's like regular in my playlist and mix as I'm working outside or driving in the car. Some of the best things in my life are because someone introduced me to them.

Someone introduced me to something or someone that I was not familiar with. My dad in 2005, introducing me to sushi. Life changing, Life changing. Somebody introducing me to the fact that steak cooked medium rare is the only way to eat steak. Can I get an amen?

All right. Nice. Thank you. Some of you are like, no, man. That thing needs to be leather.

First service. Maybe I shouldn't say this. I'm going to say it. First service. Mike Carmen was in there.

If you know Mike Carmen, you'll get this. I said, steak medium rare is the only way to eat it. I got an amen from Mike Carmen. I'm like, I've reached the pinnacle of ministry and life. I just need to quit now.

Like George Costanza. I'm out. Well, I'm done. It was a good run, everybody. But it's true.

Like, that's the best way to eat a steak. Back in 2001, 2001, some friends introduced me to a girl named Amber Brown, who is now Amber Green. Been married for the last 23 and a half years. What is Something that someone introduced you to, that there was a point in your life where you're like, I didn't know that that even existed. And

then like, that's the mark.

And now you can't imagine life without it. Pickleball. Maybe that's it for you. A hobby that you're into. A group of friends, they invited you to go out to dinner and you didn't really know anybody.

And now you couldn't imagine, you know, doing life without them. Most of us are here today because someone, someone invited us. Someone brought us to Jesus. We're here because someone introduced us to him. I'm a follower of Jesus today because of the people in my life who were patient with me, who were kind, who didn't give up when I was a punk high schooler going my own way, doing my own thing.

They prayed for me, faithfully continued to tell me about the love of Jesus, hoping that I would experience it. Who are those people in your life? A parent, a friend, a spouse? Maybe the person that's sitting right next to you this morning. Here's my point.

Most people. Most people, there's maybe some exceptions. But most people don't walk through these doors because they have some deep burning theological question. Like, Sean, I just need to learn more about the Trinity. How in the world can God be 3 and 1?

Like, most people don't come in here because they've got this deep doctrinal theological question that's wearing on their heart. They come here because somebody invited them. Somebody, somebody at one point planted a seed in their mind about Jesus. And, and when maybe you went through a hard time in your life, you're like, I don't know where else to turn. So I think I'll go to church and see what Jesus has.

Maybe someone was intentional about pouring into you and inviting you because they so badly wanted you to know, love and follow him. That's why most of us are here. And the reason why we are here because of them is because somebody was that for that person's life and somebody was that person for the person who was that for us. And then on and on and on, back through the generations, all the way to where Jesus gave his great commission to his disciples, saying, go into all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and know that I will be with you to the end of the age. Jesus gave us that commission.

People started living it out and bringing their friends to know him, to follow him, they introduced them to Jesus. And what we see in Jesus life is what we continue to experience today, that when people meet Jesus, everything can change. Everything can change. Said another way, friends bring friends to Jesus and then trust him with the rest. Friends bring friends to Jesus and then they trust him with the rest.

It's what we see in our text today. If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke chapter five. We're, we're in week two of our series that we're doing through the summer called Block Party. And you know, last year in the summer, we looked at different accounts in Jesus life where mountains and lakes served as the backdrops. This year we're going through the Gospel of Luke and just looking at different times in Jesus life where he was at a party, he was at a dinner party, he was in a neighborhood, and people just kind of gathered around and a party broke out.

And so we're going to be working through the book of Luke and seeing how Jesus responded and reacted in, in these situations that probably made a lot of people feel very uncomfortable with what was happening. But yet we find Jesus navigating and being drawn to those people in those situations. And we're gonna see what we can learn about that from him and how we can put it in practice in our own life. And so in Luke chapter five, to kind of get our biblical bearings. I don't want to read the first part that Jeff read for us earlier, but just to kind of get some context here so that we know like geographically even where we are.

What, what we read is that, that people from all over Jerusalem and Judea and the, the Galilean countryside were gathered in this one home. Like people from all over the place were gathered in one home. So let's, let's get a look at where we are here. This is kind of the, the known biblical world during this time. And so you have Italy, you have Greece, this is modern day Turkey.

Down here you have Egypt. And then right up in here, we get into like the land of Israel. And so we can zoom in just a little bit. And so this is the Dead Sea. This up here is the Sea of Galilee.

This is Jerusalem, the Judea countryside. And then the Galilean region is right here. And let's zoom into to this part and you start seeing maybe some familiar names. Nazareth, where Jesus is, some, some different places that pop up in the Gospel. And so we don't know exactly where on this map, but we know it's somewhere in this region where Jesus is sitting in this home.

And people from all over, if we can go back one map to that second one, people from all over this area were gathering up here for that. Now I got to be in this area a few years ago. It's about a two and a half, three hour bus drive to make that, and it's about a three day journey for them. Think about three days to walk from Jerusalem, Judea, up to the Galilean area. And so these people have come and they've, they've come with needs.

They've, they've, they've come looking for something from Jesus. And this house is filled with people from all over. This is like throwing a party and inviting your friends and your neighbors and your family

that lives in the other, in other states. It's, it's kind of think high school graduation party. You go into a graduation party and just the house is swarming with people and you're like, I don't know anyone.

There's, there's grandmas and grandpas and aunts and uncles and the house is just full. And some of the people there that day were hoping to be healed by Jesus. Others were there because they'd heard about him. They were curious who he was, what he was doing. And then there were some that were there for less pure motives.

Luke starts and says that Jesus is teaching and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. These were the religious leaders who had been hearing rumblings about Jesus. And they were probably in the room just to make sure that he wasn't leading people astray, that he was foolish, following God's law. And so they were watching everything that's happening with a very suspicious eye. And right there in the middle of the room is Jesus.

Right there in the middle of this cramp, packed, filled to the brim room is Jesus. I just want us to pause right here. I want you to try to put yourself in that place. Use your holy imagination and put yourself in this room. Imagine a crowd of people bumping up against you from every side.

The person next to you is one of the people that came from Jerusalem. They had been walking for three days and it's been at least that long since they had their last bath. And this was before deodorant. The room is dusty and dimly lit. It is stuffy.

The idea of personal space doesn't really even exist in your culture to begin with, but it has long gone out the window. I'm, I'm going to be at Hilltop camp next week being a dorm dad for a bunch of elementary boys. I Don't have to, like, imagine what this is going to be like. Like, this is going to be my reality starting this afternoon.

And I just imagine Jesus sitting in the middle of all of these people, all of these people that other people work really hard to avoid. And I just picture Jesus saying, father, this is why you sent me. This is why you sent me.

And so you're sitting in this room, and out of nowhere, there's this loud crashing noise. And some people are shouting outside. There's this commotion, and you're trying to look out the windows, but you can't quite see because people are blocking them. And you just hear people shouting, and you hear some noise above you, and some dust is starting to fall into your hair, and you're like, what is going on? And then you hear it again.

Another loud, crashing banging on the roof. And all of a sudden, it

hits you that someone has gotten up on top of the roof that serves as kind of like a terrace for outdoor living. And they've gotten up there, and for some reason, they're starting to tear that roof apart. They are starting to tear through those clay tiles. And you look up in this dark room, and you see light starting to shine through.

And when your eyes adjust, you see four guys leaning over, looking down into this hole that they had just made in this home. And they take their friend, who you can tell is paralyzed, and he's on a mat, and they. They work him through this hole, and they lower him down right in front of Jesus, right in the middle of this crowded room. This is one of my favorite accounts in the Gospels, and I just love kind of imagining what it would be like to be in this room. A couple of thoughts that.

That have come to mind over the years. Number one is, where did they get the rope? Like, where did they get the rope to lower this man? Like, did they bring the rope with him, thinking that they were going to do this all along? Or did they realize, oh, we can't get in the room?

And one of the guys was like, okay, hear me out, but there's some rope over there. What if we. And then came up with this plan? And then I got to thinking this week, you know, there's a moment where this guy is being lowered into the room, but he's not quite on the ground yet. He's about right here.

And Jesus is sitting there. And I just imagine he looks over and is eye to eye with Jesus. Like, I just wonder, like, did he give him a sup, Jesus? Like, what was that moment like?

And just Put yourself in there and start to imagine what the different reactions were for the people in the room. You had the crowd that's probably thinking to themselves, what is happening right now? You have the homeowner who's probably thinking, hey, Jesus, when you're done healing all of these people, can you use those carpentry skills and fix my roof, please?

And then I imagine you have the Pharisees who are sitting there appalled by what is happening, absolutely appalled, disgusted even at the the scene unfolding before them. How could this be?

And then you have the four friends up there who I imagine we probably call them bros today. They're high fiving each other. You know, they're probably like, one of them is going, that was awesome. Somebody's flexing without a doubt. And whatever people were doing, whatever they were thinking, they were all probably wondering the same thing.

What is Jesus going to do next? There's a sense of anticipation that

is hanging in the room.

Verse 20.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, friend, your sins are forgiven. Let's not miss this. Jesus performs a miracle in this man's life. He performs a miracle in this man's life simply by forgiving his sins. But if we can be honest, it is not the miracle that everyone is expecting.

I imagine the guy on the mat being like, thank you for that. Thank you, really. But I was really hoping that I could get up and walk out of this room, like, please don't make them drag me back up. I think that Jesus is doing a couple of things here. First, Jesus knows that our greatest and most important and most immediate need is forgiveness of sin.

Let me say that again. Our greatest, most important, most urgent and immediate need is forgiveness of sin. It is a restored relationship with God. And it is a need that every single one of us come with when we come to Jesus, regardless of the situation that we are in. And you may think of friends right now who are hurting.

They are hurting physically, they are hurting emotionally, mentally. And you want someone so badly for Jesus to heal them. They have needs that seem too great. Or you may have friends who, who are successful and they seem like they have their lives all put together. They seem to need for nothing.

You may have friends who are good people who do good things for others. And you may have friends that are scoundrels who take advantage of people. It doesn't matter. For every single one of us, our greatest and most immediate need is forgiveness. It is a restored relationship with the Father.

Because here's the thing. No matter who you are, every single one of us. We have gone our own way. We have done our own thing. We have sinned against God, and we need forgiveness.

And we can be good, moral people, we can do good for others, but we still have this brokenness in us, this separation between us and God. And what we need more than anything else is forgiveness to be restored to our Heavenly Father. And I think that one of the things that Jesus is doing in this moment by starting with this miracle in this man's life, is he showing us that our greatest need is not always our most obvious need. Our greatest need is not always our most obvious need. And so before he does anything to heal this man's physical body, he heals his soul.

He restores his. His soul. He forgives his sins because he knows that

is his first and most immediate need. But I also think that Jesus starts here. Because when you read through the Gospels, whenever the Pharisees are in the room, you could probably rightly say that Jesus was a troublemaker, that Jesus liked to get in there and stir the pot.

And I think that there were some times where he did some things kind of intentionally to get a reaction out of them so that he could then turn around and teach truth about the gospel and about how God sees people. And so in this room, you. You have. You have people who are eventually going to be a part of killing Jesus. They didn't kill him because they liked him.

Jesus was stirring something up in them. These guys followed every command that they could to a T, but they completely missed the heart of the Father for people. And so we see this in verse 21. The Pharisees and the teachers of the laws began thinking to themselves, who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy who can forgive sins but God alone? And 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, walk, like to say, right? Like, we follow Jesus logic here. To say your sins are forgiven is actually a pretty easy thing to say. Like, you can say anything you want. You can say anything you want, but if you can't verify it, then how is anybody going to know it's true?

Like, I could stand up here in front of you this morning and say, you know, I once benched 450. I know lost some muscle mass, but I did one time that I can dunk a basketball. And one time when the 90s Bulls were playing the Pacers, Michael Jordan actually reached out to me and was like, sean, man, I need someone to help me warm up. And you're the only one who can do it. And so let's go play a game on one on one.

And I actually beat him. It's pretty great. I can say all these things and you would be very right to question the validity of them, but you can't prove it. Like, you can't prove it. Anybody can say your sins are forgiven, because who's going to be able to prove them wrong?

Well, okay, I guess maybe they're forgiven. I don't know. So because of that, Jesus takes the next step. Verse 24, he says, but I want you to know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Now, remember back in the passage that Jeff read for us, he already said that he had authority to heal, the power to heal.

Now he's saying he has the authority to forgive sins. And so he said to the paralyzed man, I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home. And immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on, and went home praising God. Like, to say someone's sins are forgiven is. Is easy unless you actually have the authority to forgive sin.

To tell someone, hey, yeah, get up and walk. That's easy, unless you have the authority to heal someone. And as this man got up and he rolled up his mat and he walked out the door that day, Jesus proved that he had the authority to do both. Jesus had the authority to heal this man, and he had the authority to forgive his sin. The visible miracle of the healing validated the invisible miracle of the forgiveness.

And you can imagine the reaction. We see it in verse 26. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe. And they said, we have seen remarkable things today.

That word, remarkable. And actually that phrase, remarkable things. The Greek word is paradoxos. We know that word. We know that word.

It's. It's seeing something that you can't believe. It doesn't make sense. It's absurd, it's unexpected, illogically, it's impossible. And yet it's absolutely true because you're seeing it with your own eyes.

That is what people were experiencing in this moment. And I think that they were amazed. Not just because Jesus healed him, they were amazed. See, I think we read the story of the healing and we're like, oh, man, that's impossible. How did that happen?

I think they hear the forgiveness and are equally amazed by that. How can someone be forgiven by God outside of making a sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sin outside of the temple? How can someone be forgiven of their sin in the middle of this home with a busted up roof by this rabbi who's sitting here teaching? It was mind blowing. And people walked away that day, not just amazed, but putting the dots together, that who they had just sat with, who they had just been with that day was God in flesh.

Only God had the ability to forgive sins. Only God has the ability to heal. Connect those dots. Jesus is Lord. And they walked away that day praising God, perplexed, but praising God for it.

And it all happened because four friends loved their friend enough to bring him to Jesus and to trust him with the rest. And these miracles would have never happened without the faith of these friends who were willing to literally do whatever it took to get their friend before Jesus. And their faith is incredible. I celebrate these men's faith. I can't wait to meet them one day on the other side of eternity.

And these guys, their faith didn't just start when they carried their friend up the roof. It didn't start when they started tearing the roof up to lower him down. The faith of these four friends started earlier that day when they heard that Jesus was gonna be in town. And they're like, you know who we need to take to see him? Maybe Jesus can do

something.

They picked him up and they brought him to him. Friends help friends get to Jesus and then they trust him with the rest. They do whatever they can to remove barriers, to tear down walls or roofs, trusting that one encounter with Jesus might change everything in that person's life.

Thinking about that this summer there are some of our neighbors that for a little while now, I've been praying intentionally for by name, just that I would be able to be a spiritual influence in their life and help them find and follow Jesus. And so I've got these neighbors that again, I pray for by name every day. And then to be honest, there are some people on our little cul de sac that we live in that I know their dogs names, but I don't know their names, that I know what kind of car they drive, but I don't know them. I can't be the only one in the room, right? Like, I'm not the only one.

Help me. Okay, maybe it's just me. All right, well, so I've just kind of made a commitment this summer. I just want to get to know my neighbors more, be friends. And so that means I need to take the step, the first step.

If friends bring their friends to Jesus and trust him with the rest, it starts with friendship. And for so many people, the barrier that they have to Jesus is not necessarily some theological hangup. The barrier that they have to Jesus is that they don't see a good example of Jesus in their life. They don't have a friend who's a follower.

So I just want to be a friend. I want to grow in these relationships so that God may use it somehow to help them one day find and follow him. And so Amber and I talked with some of our neighbors that live across the street from us who go to Sherwood Oaks, and we kind of have, you know, similar desire. And so we just decided this summer we are going to host a block party on our street, and we're going to invite all of our neighbors, and our front yards kind of butt up against each other. And so we're going to pull out a grill and.

And cook up some hot dogs, play some yard games. They have a pool, so we're going to swim. I don't know if they know that yet. They'll find out in the next service if they're here. I'm looking to see, but we'll swim.

And it's just no agenda, but getting to know our neighbors a little bit more, developing, hopefully, friendships that the Lord will use. And so here's the summer challenge that I just want to throw out to you. Would you consider throwing a block party for your neighborhood?

And I don't know how you define neighborhood. I know for some of us that's pretty easy. You know, I can imagine what my neighborhood is.

It's just my, you know, McKenzie Court street that I want to invite. That we're going to invite.

You may live on a county road where, like, your closest neighbor is a half mile down the road. I don't know what it is for you. Don't get too hung up on that word neighborhood. Just think about people who live in proximity to you.

Are you willing to just send out some invites and say, hey, on this day, we're gonna. We're just gonna throw a party. Let's get to know each other. We live next to each other. Let's just get to know each other a little bit more.

Again, no agenda, but having fun, growing in friendship. Keep it simple. Hot dogs, ice cream, popsicles, some games. You don't have to present the gospel. You don't have to have, you know, awkward spiritual conversations.

In fact, I beg you, please don't have awkward conversations. Just create spaces where friendships can grow. And so the goal I'm putting out is let's do 100 of these this summer and Got a little image up on the screen. This is 100 homes I've got. We have one already, so let's go.

Yep, there we go. We've got one. And what I'd love to see is over the next several weeks, let's just fill this up. Like these homes that are grayed out, let's let the light of Jesus shine from them. If you're willing to maybe get involved and throw one of these block parties, let me know, because I just want to pray for you as you're doing this.

Maybe we can learn some stuff from each other. So you can send me an email@sgreenocc.org and let us know that you're doing that. We want to partner with you in that. So friends bring friends to Jesus, and they trust him with the rest. Be those kind of friends to others, the kind of friends that want us, that we see in our text today, that want so desperately to help people find Jesus.

As we close out this morning, I want to go back to our account, and when I read it, I kind of see four different groups. The first group is the grumbling Pharisees.

They're the ones taking it all in with a little bit of a critical eye, muttering to themselves, kind of cynical. And sometimes I think Pharisees get a bad rap. I think that they were probably wanting to make sure that Jesus wasn't going to lead people astray. There had been some other false messiahs and false prophets, but they couldn't see the new thing that God was doing in their midst. Number two, you have some faithful friends.

And these are the friends that brought their friend to Jesus. They had

someone in their life that they passionately removed barriers to bring to him. You have curious onlookers, and this is actually the majority of the people in our text today. We don't really hear much about them, but they're the ones that are just in the house taking in everything. And they praise God for what they see others doing, but they weren't really engaged in it.

They themselves. And then lastly, you have the transformed friend. You have the man who came into the room one way and left the room another way.

As we close out this morning, just look at this list and I'm wondering, which group do you identify with right now?

Do you find yourself more kind of looking at a critical eye of others separating, keeping people at a distance, especially people who aren't necessarily like you. You don't feel comfortable around them. Kind of question everything.

Are you one of those faithful friends that's Actively praying for people in your life who are close to you but living far from God. You're pulling your neighbors together. At the 8 o' clock service, there was a guy that came up and he's, hey, I want to show you a picture. And he showed me a picture of a block party that they had just had. And he started pointing to people that were sitting there around the grill in his neighborhood that weren't followers of Jesus that He was hoping and praying for.

If that's you, keep doing what you're doing and set the pace for the rest of us. Maybe you're a curious onlooker and you like that. You're a part of maybe a church that does these things, but you're like, it's much more comfortable just sitting here, taking it all in.

Maybe for you it's time to get in the game, to bring people to Jesus.

Maybe today you're that friend who needs this transformation. You're here because somebody brought you, somebody invited you, somebody at some point told you about Jesus.

You know that you are looking for new life and a fresh start. And I just want to tell you that Jesus still offers today the miracle of forgiveness. In your life, it does not matter where you've been or what you have done, what life has been like up to this point, Jesus has made a way for you through his life, his death and his resurrection. For you to experience forgiveness, fresh start and newness today. You do not have to walk out of this room the way that you walked in.

So if you're ready to take that step, we'd love to come alongside of you, help you find Him. We're going to come to our time of response.

And if you need someone to pray with you, something going on in your life, maybe even about something we talked about, have some people around the room with lanyards to do that. We've got communion stations up front and in the back. Take communion, take it back to your seat whenever you're ready.

Remember Jesus body that was given as you take the bread and his blood that was shed as you drink the cup. And if you're ready to meet Jesus, to be transformed by him, to leave differently than you came up to somebody with that lanyard with love to lead you in that. So God, we give you this time. Thank you for those who are friends that brought us to you. Lord, may we be that friend to others.

Meet us here in this moment as we commune with you in Jesus name,
Amen.