FEATURED SERMON

CALLED TO BE CARRIERS

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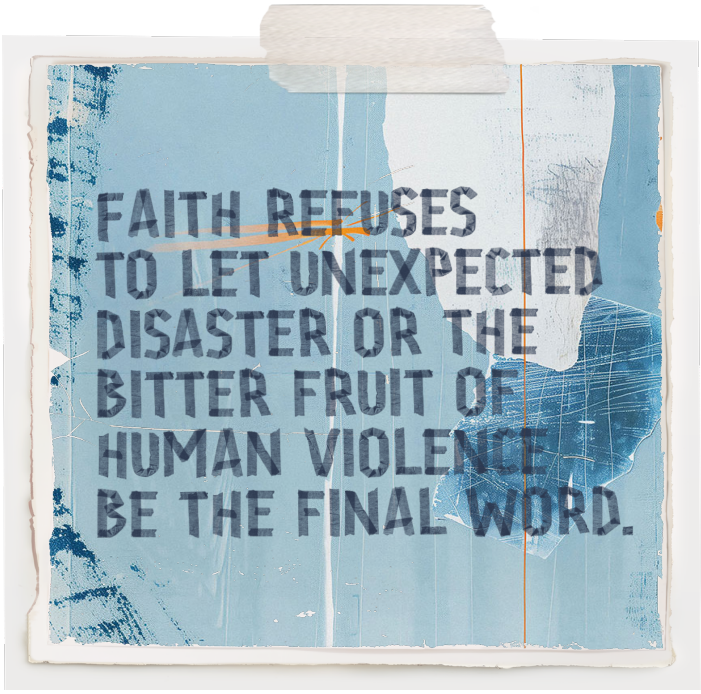
This sermon is featured as a complementary resource to the scripture notes and sermon starters on page 3 of this Resource Guide. Preachers are welcome to use elements of this powerful personal message within their own settings; please do so with attribution to Rev. Kim.

How many of you have experienced that feeling of being stuck? Not just the inconvenience of traffic on the interstate or a project at work that refuses to move forward. Not just the busyness of a calendar packed so tight that your emotions get squeezed somewhere in between appointments. I mean that deeper sense of being stuck—when we feel trapped, unsure of the next step, wrestling with the unknown, or sitting in the fog of uncertainty.

As a first-generation immigrant, since I moved to the States in 2016, I know what it feels like to walk through doors that are both new and uncertain. More often, I feel as though I am standing in the midst of a dense forest—unsure of the next step, unable to see very far ahead, bound by the limits of a visa and the vulnerability that comes with it. Every step I have taken, every door I have passed through, has been both daunting and hopeful—full of uncertainty, yet alive with possibility. I would not have made it this far without the help of God and God's people—friends, mentors, congregations, who carried me, encouraged me, and sometimes even cut through barriers on my behalf.

And in many ways, that is not just my story—it is the story of today's world. We live in a time when so many people feel stuck, pressed up against barriers they did not choose. Families are displaced by natural disasters—earthquakes, typhoons, or floods that swallow homes, churches, and neighborhoods in a single night. Refugees flee war zones—parents clutching children, carrying them through the chaos of violence and gunfire. Even close to home, our neighbors still struggle to rebuild after hurricanes on the coast, wildfires in the West, or tornadoes that rip through Midwestern towns.

These stories are not rare—they are constant reminders that life can change in an instant and that none of us can manage alone. We see communities rallying to raise walls and repair roofs. We see strangers becoming family, offering food, shelter, or simple presence. We see that faith refuses to let unexpected disaster or the bitter fruit of human violence be the final word.



That is why this gospel story in Mark matters so much for us. When Jesus returned to Capernaum, the house was so crowded that there was no room left—not even outside the door (2:1-2). A paralyzed man lay on a mat, carried by four friends who believed that healing was possible (2:3). But when they arrived, every pathway to Jesus was blocked. The doorway was jammed. No one was moving to make space. (2:4a).

Imagine the scene. The friends' shoulders ache from the long walk, the rough edges of the mat cutting into their palms. With every step, they have carried not just their friend's paralyzed body, but also the unspoken weight of society's judgment. People whisper that his paralysis is punishment from God, that he or his parents must have sinned. Every glance from the crowd reminded them of the stigma they could never quite set down. (2:5-7)

Perhaps, inside their hearts, a battle raged. Weariness pushed against hope. Doubt pressed against determination. They may have silently regretted ever suggesting the journey—"Why did I think this was possible?" Or they might have muttered under their breath—"Maybe the rabbis were right. Maybe he really does deserve this." And the voices of the crowd—the old whispers of blame and shame—echoed

in their ears and hearts: “He does not belong here. Healing is not for people like him.”

And yet, even as those voices closed in, something deeper stirred within them—quieter than shame, stronger than doubt. A voice that rose from love and faith, from a refusal to surrender—"No, we cannot leave him at the door.” Not this time. Not when he has been left outside so many times before. If the usual way is blocked, then we will try another. If the door is shut, we will search for a window. If the ground is too crowded, then we will find the courage to climb to the roof (2:4b). One more time, one more step, more creatively, more courageously, because love and compassion will not stop at a closed door.

Somewhere between being stuck on the ground and breaking through the roof, we realize this story is no longer ancient—it’s happening right now. Because this is not just a story about one man on a mat and four friends on a roof, it’s about all of us—how we choose to respond when someone near us cannot move on their own. It’s about what faith looks like when every path forward feels blocked, when the usual doors of compassion, justice, and community seem jammed shut. In that in-between tension, our faith begins to move again.

In my own immigrant and faith journey, I could never have made it this far without the people who carried me—families, friends, mentors, and congregations who refused to leave me at the door when life seemed closed or uncertain in this foreign land. Every step of grace in my story bears the fingerprints of those carriers—people whose faith made a new way when I could not see one.

And that’s not just my story. It’s our story—told again and again through the ministry of Week of Compassion. We are all called to join those four friends on the roof, carrying one another through the storms and the paralyzing seasons of life. When the world says, “impossible,” faith replies, “We’ll find **A NEW WAY**, together.” When doors are closed, we climb roofs – courageously and creatively. When pathways are blocked, we dig through – patiently and persistently. Every time we shoulder someone else’s burden, rebuild what has been torn down, or make space where there was no room before, we live this gospel all over again.

In the midst of the storms and paralyzing moments of life today—here in our neighborhoods and across the world – we are all called to move forward and upward, to keep finding a new way when the way seems gone or blocked. Because the paralysis we see today is not only physical; it’s social, spiritual, and systemic.

Today’s paralysis can be seen in the deep fractures of our nation, where neighbors struggle to speak across political lines and where public trust and common sense feel painfully thin. It appears in the persistent wounds of every kind of

–phobia and –ism that continues to divide and dehumanize. It shows up in the anxiety of economic instability, as ordinary families face impossible choices between healthcare, housing, and hope. And it lingers in the weariness of congregations trying to do ministry in a world that often seems too divided or distracted to notice the hopeful tomorrow.

The paralysis extends beyond our borders—to a world trembling under the weight of climate change, to regions scarred by war and displacement, to communities recovering from earthquakes, typhoons, and floods. These, too, are places where people long for someone to carry them to God’s love—to remind them that healing and wholeness are still possible.

I’m not sure how you see today’s world or how you read today’s story. But wherever you find yourself, the call is the same: to move, to carry, to find **A NEW WAY** to healing and hope. Because there are still crowded rooms and closed doors all around us—people waiting to be lifted, places where love needs to break through.

Through and with the ministry of Week of Compassion, we continue to see faith and love in motion: roofs opened, lives rebuilt, strangers welcomed, futures restored. So, let’s keep rising, keep risking, and keep finding **A NEW WAY** – together. Thanks be to God.