SCRIPTURE REFLECTION & SERMON STARTERS

> *When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door, and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.* ***And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.*** *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."*
>
> *+ Mark 2: 1 - 5*

In a time marked by disruption, uncertainty, and rapid change, Week of Compassion is deeply shaped by the moment we are living in. Many of our partners are experiencing reduced resources, shrinking leadership capacity, and the increasing frequency of weather-related disasters, while political upheaval, economic volatility, and armed conflicts continue across the globe. Yet amid these realities, Week of Compassion daily witnesses human resilience, courage, generosity, and hope.

The gospel story (Mark 2:1-5) offers a profound image of what Christian community looks like in such a world. The gospel writer does not give names, identities, or backgrounds for the four who carry their friend – because what matters is not who they are, but what they do. They see someone in need, and they refuse to leave him behind. When the usual path to Jesus is blocked, they imagine **A NEW WAY**.

As Dr. Pheme Perkins notes in the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, "Mark uses the immense popularity of Jesus with the crowds…to create an obstacle for the men seeking a miracle. They cannot get near Jesus, and their determination to do so exhibits the faith that moves Jesus to heal the man (v.5a)." Their faith is not silent or theoretical – it is active, persistent, communal, embodied, and creative.

Today, we face our own versions of blocked doorways: exhausted systems, neighborhood divisions, disaster-stricken communities, immigration barriers, congregations stretched thin, and a world where recovery takes longer than anyone expected. In these moments, the call of the gospel remains the same – to carry one another toward healing, even when the path is complicated or unclear.

Week of Compassion does not do this work alone. Like the four friends on the roof, our ministry depends on long-term partnerships, collaborative networks, and communities committed to staying present long after the crowds have moved on.

The same areas of **western Kentucky** that Disciples supported following the 2021 winter tornado outbreak saw record-setting flooding earlier this year. The long-term recovery groups (still) working on tornado response then had to contend with flooding, and that complicates recovery! Without partners who accompany communities for the long haul, rebuilding would be nearly impossible. But together, they continue to lift one another toward hope.

This gospel story reminds us that healing rarely happens in isolation – it happens when people come together and refuse to give up. When one person cannot take another step, someone else carries the mat. When the doorway is too crowded, someone looks toward the roof. When the world says there is no way, faith imagines **A NEW WAY**.

As you think about your church's response to the needs in your community, and to neighbors throughout the nation and the world:

- How is your church/community experiencing these fractures? Where does your community stand in need of healing?
- How is your congregation building new relationships in the surrounding community? Do you have any ecumenical or interfaith connections?
- When have you seen your church/community care for each other with the abandon and perseverance of the gospel friends?
- How is your congregation finding new ways to be faithful in hard times?
- How might we create and strengthen communities that rely on each other to spark resilience, transformation, and hope?