

Sermon Topic: Culture of Teamwork by Pr Wendy Chiang-Cheong, 26 Feb 2017  
Sermon Text: Mark 2:1-12, Exodus 18:17-23, Numbers 11:10-17

## **Introduction**

Moral of story on the lion and 4 buffalos:

The lion will never keep away. Never turn your horns and hoofs towards those who are part of your team. Believe that we are not only stronger together as a team, act on it!

### **God's team is called the Church (also Body, Community and Family):**

- to draw all people to Himself through Jesus Christ.
- to engage humanity that men be reconciled to Him and experience the gift of abundant life in Christ.
- to weaken the prowling lion's strategy to isolate so as to divide, destroy and devour.

**The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.** Collaboration and connection among individuals is better than what each one would be individually. The role of the church in the world is a team effort that requires the cooperation of all the members of the body of Christ.

The value of teamwork from Mark 1:1-12:

*And Jesus came to Capernaum. After some days it was reported that He was at home. So that many gathered there, and there was no more room left for any of them, not even near the rim of the door; and He was preaching to them. And that's when they came, **carrying with them a paralytic, carried by four of them.** But when they saw that they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had made an opening, they lowered down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And when Jesus saw their faith... he said to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven."*

*There were some scribes there who questioned in their hearts, "How can this man say this? This is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were questioning like this, and so He said to them, "Why do you question like this in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say to this paralytic, 'My child your sins are forgiven'; or, 'Rise, take up your bed, go home'?"*

*"So... that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—He said to that paralytic, " My child, pick up your bed, go home." Immediately he picked up what he had been lying on and he went out before them all. The crowd was awestruck. Astonished, they glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this before."*

A familiar story of:

- The **authority** of Jesus to forgive the sins of men
- The **power** of Jesus to heal the diseased and sick
- The revelation of Jesus' **identity** as the Son of Man
- The **effects** of the Kingdom of God on earth

But let's visit this story from the perspective of four unnamed friends. Their faith caught Jesus' attention. **JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH (vs 5)**. How did Jesus see their faith? What did Jesus see?

- Faith involves more than a belief.
- It includes taking risk to act on the belief.
- Their belief in God to do something + love for one another were expressed through **active teamplay**. This team,
  - Saw a human being, rather than a societal burden, in need of healing
  - Heard about the "move of God" and took action
  - Shared the weight of task and carried the load from start to end
  - Considered roadblocks as means to look up and think out of the box
  - Laid the outcome at the feet of Jesus

As a result, a man was forgiven and healed, the people were astonished and the glory of God was revealed.

**Idea #1: Teamwork, motivated by faith in God and love for one another, accomplishes much.**

Doesn't matter these 4 men knew prior if they had enough faith to begin with. If each of them had a **speck of faith** to begin with, it was certainly enlarged through mutual encouragement and cooperation, something we cannot do for ourselves if we choose to work alone:

- Teams not simply to accomplish a task.
- Teams are God's invitation into spiritual community to sharpen and support one another (**Ecclesiastes 4:9**) Handling life or ministry alone is risky and unwise.

Teams may have good structures but work may not always get done through teams. Moses knew in his wilderness assignment:

*Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone... select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens...have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because **they will carry it with you (vs 22)**...you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied. (Exodus 18:17-23)*

Observing Moses at work, Jethro advised Moses to:

- Divide and delegate (productivity was necessary)
- Do an organizational makeover for efficiency.

Human organization is God's gift. Jethro was wise in counsel. But this external re-structuring did not achieve the contentment assumed and promised by Jethro or a unity of spirit. Why?

**Idea #2: Teamwork is more than an organisational issue.**

Moses heard the people of every family wailing (meat not manna) at the entrance to their tents. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.

He asked the Lord, "...Why do you tell me to **carry them** in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!'

**I cannot carry** all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me...(the demands on life are often unreasonable)...

The Lord said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will **share the burden** of the people with you so that **you will not have to carry it alone**. (Numbers 11:10-17)

God's team that operates without a shared spirit can take a toll on the leader:

"Loneliness in leadership can be so deep and so destructive that we cannot find our way out. No mere organizational tweak will address this kind of isolation. God had to address Moses' isolation at a soul level. And He alleviated Moses' aloneness in leadership by empowering a spiritual team to bear the emotional and spiritual burdens of leading the people...a team committed to the journey and who were fully vested in the vision." – **Ruth Harley Barton, "Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership.**

**Idea #3: Teamwork requires the sharing of spirit.**

Teams with a kindred and shared spirit:

- Trust one another to share life instead of grumbling/murmuring against one another
- Resolve conflict and work at mistakes instead of avoiding conflict
- Commit to assigned role & responsibility instead of hiding from responsibility
- Account to one another instead of avoiding accountability
- Attend to results rather than neglecting outcome?

We already have a shared spirit in the Holy Spirit when we are born again in Christ. A shared spirit is a divine work brought forth by God. But are we participating in it? Are we knitted together? Or do we choose isolation because of:

- a paralysis of private faith: I don't team play because faith is between me and God
- a paralysis of pride: I don't team play because I can get job done faster without others
- a paralysis of perfectionism: I trash everyone's idea I perceive to be imperfect.
- a paralysis caused by pain of conflict: I've been emotionally and socially hurt before in teams. I no longer want to be part of it

Which of these paralysis do we need to go to God to be forgiven and healed of?

Cell Group Discussion Questions:

This week, read yourselves into the story of the paralytic:

1. What is it about the 4 friends that makes you identify with them? In what ways do you feel that you work well with others for the common good? Work well in helping others get near Jesus?
2. What in you finds it difficult to work in teams? What paralyzes you such that you do not work well in a team?
3. What in you feel like the passive observer or critical bystander in the crowd?
4. Do you think Aldersgate displays a kind of team spirit that makes God look our way and blesses it? Elaborate.

***If the solidarity of the friends obtains for the paralytic the forgiveness of sins, then who knows what the Lord can accomplish in and through us when we band together in shared spirit for God's service.***