

## Which way to run? Mark 2:1-12

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"[NIV]

Church and work can often feel in conflict. Our local church needs an army of willing volunteers if its ministry is to continue and thrive, but often after a hard day's work, dragging ourselves out for an evening activity can be quite a chore. With deadlines to meet, travel commitments and shift work, even our Sundays can get quite crowded out too. We might often sense that we are letting others down, even letting God down, when our engagement with work and the everyday world means we are not available for church things. But is this the only way of expressing our Christian faith?

In this story, there were plenty of willing volunteers ready to pack the place out and support the religious activities of a visit from Jesus to the town. But those who are commended as a people of true faith, are not the ones who simply rushed to join the crowd, but those whose instincts send them running in the opposite direction. In fact the well-intentioned crowd became a barrier to the man who most needed to get to the feet of Jesus. The religious experts may have had the front seats, but all they could offer was debate and criticism; hope for a paralysed man came because four of his friends rushed into the everyday world of business and life, wondering how their awareness of the presence of Jesus might make a difference to someone they knew there.

Sometimes being at work might take us away from the comfort and safety of the church crowd, whose desire to hear from and to see Jesus is utterly commendable. But our faith and effectiveness does not depend or find its only expression through participating in church-centred activities. As you engage with the world of work, you are not leaving Jesus behind, or even neglecting His presence. Taking your example from these four men, you can do so with a sense of commission and purpose - being at work can be no less a reaction to the transforming presence of God - it is not so much a question of the direction in which you run as your reason for travel.

**Christ, whose love for the world knows no limit;  
And whose presence in this world can know no bound,  
Whatever I do this day,  
And wherever its tasks might take me,  
May I always know that I am one with Your People,  
Not because of the place in which I am found,  
But the purpose that I seek there  
AMEN**