2 LOADS

Many years later God sent someone to save us all, and bring us back to God. Wasn't Jonah, wasn't Nehemiah, wasn't Elijah, nor even King Hezekiah. It was Jesus, born to Mary, the wife of a poor carpenter name Joseph, but really he was God's Son.
Crowds of people came to see Jesus, because they had heard of the amazing things he did. Even better were the things he said. There were some people too who only came to find fault with Jesus. One day when he was in a house, there were so many people that they couldn’t all get in. It was standing room only, and many outside too.

5 men were very late! They were carrying 2 heavy loads. Four men were carrying their friend, who could not walk - his legs were paralysed. The friend carried a heavier load, in his heart. (What could it be?)

"Oops! We can't get in to see Jesus." they said. What to do? They spy the steps leading up to the flat roof of the house (houses in that dry country had flat roofs, often made of dried mud spread over tree branches). "That's it!" they say to each other, and up
the steps they go, carrying their sick and surprised friend!

MIRACLES

Miracles are things that don't normally happen. Fish don't normally rescue drowning men at sea. Fire does not normally fall from the sky and burn up wet meat and wet firewood and stones. Huge armies do not normally die all in one night. This day, however, was to be a day of miracles.

- 2 Loads? The man was very SICK and had to be carried. He, like all of us, had a load of SIN in his heart, far worse than legs that don't work.
As Jesus is talking to the crowd, dust begins to fall from the roof above them. Then there is a patch of bright sunlight.

1, 2, 3 4 heads peered over the edge of a large hole in the roof! Everyone was looking up, amazed, and so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

"Something is being lowered on ropes!". It was the sick friend - despite the crowd, space was made for him, and his friends lowered him to the floor right in front of Jesus.
Jesus sees the 4 friends' faith (they trusted that Jesus could heal
the sick man). He looks at the sick man on the floor, and says
"Son, your sins are forgiven." What! Not "your legs are healed,
get up and walk". No, for sin in our hearts is a far greater load
than legs that won't walk. You can be happy even without any
legs, but you cannot be happy with sin - cannot be happy
without being forgiven. Far better to hear from Jesus "Son (or
Daughter), your sins are forgiven". Mark's Gospel, chapter 2
verse 5

Some people grumbled in their thoughts "Who does he think he
is? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" v7. Jesus knows what
they are thinking, and says "What is easier? To say 'Your sins are forgiven', or 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'?' Well, which is easier? I can't do either of them and nor can you, so they are just as hard. Still, it's easy to prove a man's lame legs are cured. You can see! It's hard to prove a man's sins are forgiven - you can't see anything. So Jesus is saying 'if I can heal this man, which you can see, I can forgive him his sins against God, which you can't see'.

• He who can do the easier miracle can also do the harder one. Jesus says to the man "Get up, take your mat, and go home." verse 11 The man did just as he was told, and walked out in full view of them all (verse 12). The people said "We have never seen anything like this!"

MORE DIGGING

• There was more to come - an even greater Miracle.
• Jesus went about doing good, healing the sick, and telling the people how to come back to God, and to be happy in His kingdom for ever and ever. But after 3 years, Jesus the Son of Man and the Son of God (for he is both) began digging the deepest hole ever dug, all the way down to DEATH itself.
• A wooden cross was planted there, and bad and cruel men nailed Jesus to the cross, and left him to die. Mean people laughed and made fun of him. Even the sun hid its face for 3 hours, and then he died.

• **Why?** Because he was dying for your sin and mine. Taking our punishment, so that we don’t have to. So that he can say to us, if we trust in him, “Son, Daughter, your sins are forgiven”. That is the only way it could ever be done. God gave His only Son to die for us. "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, (Jesus) Christ died for us" Romans chapter 5 verse 8
Jesus was buried in a rocky cave, His greatest work finished. A very BIG stone was rolled over the way into the cave. But God would not let DEATH keep him. On the 3rd day after, the cave was found open, and no body was there! He had come back to glorious life. "Death has been swallowed up in victory ... thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 55-57
Jesus said that he was the like a Cap Stone, which a builder sets at the top of an archway or bridge, to keep it in shape and make it strong.

We can all be Living Stones built up and held up by Jesus the Cap Stone (1 Peter chapter 2, verse 5). If you ask him, and really mean it, he will forgive your sins, and make you a living stone in his new house, a happy home for ever and ever. Without Jesus we are all like miserable old stones lying lonely in the dark. Will you ask him to forgive you, and make you a happy stone in his heavenly home? He will do it!

It is worth making a hole in a house if that is the only way to get to Jesus. Will you trust yourself to Him. Will you say "King Jesus, please
forgive my sins, help me every day to follow You, and take me home to heaven when I die, always to be with You."

The path of following Jesus is not always an easy one, but it is the only path that leads to the happy home in Heaven. It is the only path to true happiness. Jesus has promised to be there with us on the path, though we cannot yet see him. He says "I will never leave you" (Hebrews 13:5) All other paths lead us into the darkness, where at last there is no happiness, no joy, no light, no friends, but only ever-lasting sadness and sorrow.

Here is the completed picture-story: