

**Stand Up**  
**Pour Out His Love on the World, Part Two:**  
**Make a Difference in the World**  
**Matthew 25.31-46, Luke 11.42, James 1.22-27, 2.14-19**

**October 9, 2022**

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In his wonderful history of the church during the first three centuries, called *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*, Alan Kreider tells the true story of a young man living in Upper Egypt around the year 300 who suddenly found himself in terrible trouble.

Pachomius grew up in a small town as part of a poor pagan farming family. But one day, when he was only twenty, he was nabbed by gangs of troops that were carrying out forced military conscriptions, capturing young men and forcing them against their will to become soldiers in the Egyptian army. He and several friends from his village were chained, thrown onto ships, and hauled down the Nile.

When they got to Thebes, where they docked for the night, they were put in prison to keep them from escaping. Christians in Thebes heard about these young men who were chained up and held under guard in the prison, and they were deeply concerned. They gathered together some things to eat and drink, and hurried to the prison, where they shared the food with the captured men.

Pachomius was surprised that total strangers would show them care in that way and asked someone who the people were who were so willing to perform such a humble act of mercy and bring them help.

It was the Christians, he was told, who “were in the habit of doing acts of kindness toward everyone ... especially strangers.”

When he asked what a Christian was, Pachomius was told they were godly people, followers of a genuine religion, putting their hope in Him who made heaven and earth. They bear the name of Jesus Christ, and do good to everyone in his name.

According to the ancient account, when Pachomius heard that, his heart was “set on fire.” He felt as though his interior was flooded with light and he felt irresistibly drawn to the Christian faith.

Right then he prayed and committed himself to God, promising that if God showed him how to live a holy life from that point forward, and if he set him free from his chains, he would serve Christ all his days, loving God and loving all those God brought into his life,

serving them as he himself had been served. And he did. (this is a paraphrase of several accounts).

As the account says, Christians were people who were in the habit of doing acts of kindness toward everyone ... especially strangers. Where did they get that idea?

During the last week he spent on earth, Jesus sought to prepare his disciples for the fact that he would soon leave them, and it would be a long, long time before he returned.

To prepare them for that long time of waiting, He left them with three parables about how to live faithfully in the in-between. We find these in Matthew 25:

First the parable of the women and the lamps, about how we are to keep our eyes and our hearts fixed on Jesus, faithfully waiting for his return no matter how long it takes.

Next, the parable of the three servants and the different treasures that are entrusted to them, about how we are to invest the gifts and resources God has given us to make a kingdom difference during our lives.

And last, the parable of the sheep and the goats, about how we are to see the world as God sees it, loving those God brings into our lives or into our awareness who are in need, and making a difference by meeting those needs in practical ways.

Getting ready to leave them, Jesus invites his followers to see the world as he sees it, held in the Father's hands . . .

### **Image of World**



. . . and He sends us out into the world to make a difference – his representatives fleshing out his love in his name.

Here's how that third parable begins. You can find it in Matthew chapter 25, beginning in verse 31:

**Matthew 25.31-33**

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

**Matthew 25.34-36**

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

**Matthew 25.37-39**

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

**Matthew 25.40**

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

In his book *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller defines the biblical idea of justice as “giving people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care...”

Justice, he says, “reflects the character of God.” That’s why Jesus spoke such stern words to those who neglected justice.

**Luke 11.42**

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God.

Over and over again in Scripture, as Keller points out, “justice describes taking up the care and cause of widows, orphans, immigrants, and the poor—those who have been called ‘the quartet of the vulnerable.’”

Whatever you do for one of the least of these, you do for me.

James echoes the parable of Jesus and reminds us that, according to Scripture, true Christian faith isn't just about what we believe. It's about what we do – how we live – as well. Our faith, if it's genuine, will show up in our actions.

### **James 1.22-27**

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. . . . Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### **James 2.14-19**

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Here's how Keller sums up what the Bible teaches about justice.

"We do justice when we give all human beings their due as creations of God. Doing justice includes not only the righting of wrongs, but generosity and social concern, especially toward the poor and vulnerable. . . . It consists of a broad range of activities, from simple fair and honest dealings with people in daily life, to regular, radically generous giving of your time and resources, to activism that seeks to end particular forms of injustice, violence, and oppression."

Two thoughts as we think about seeking to make a difference in our world as followers of Christ. We know these things, but it's helpful to be reminded.

First, through our efforts we don't bring about the new heaven and the new earth. That's God's work. But we *are* called to reflect and anticipate that kingdom that is coming – to put it on display.

And second, through our efforts to seek justice and show mercy we may not make a *lasting* difference – few changes on this side of eternity are permanent – but we will make both a *significant* difference – there are no small things when it comes to showing love – and an *eternal* difference – everything we do in the name of Christ has eternal value.

### **Colossians 3.17**

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

One of my favorite songs is called “Great Love.” It is a wonderful, haunting song about the difference we can make in this world when we do small things with great love.

As Lauren sings it, I want to invite you to prayerfully reflect on how God is calling us to be his hands and feet in this world.

[Verse 1]

In the garden of our Savior, no flower grows unseen  
His kindness rains like water on every humble seed  
No simple act of mercy escapes His watchful eye  
For there is One who loves me  
His hand is over mine

[Verse 2]

In the kingdom of the heavens, no suffering is unknown  
Each tear that falls is holy, each breaking heart a throne  
There is a song of beauty on ev'ry weeping eye  
For there is One who loves me  
His heart, it breaks with mine

[Bridge]

Oh, the deeds forgotten; oh, the works unseen  
Every drink of water flowing graciously  
Every tender mercy, You're making glorious  
**This You have asked us**  
**Do little things with great love**  
Little things with great love

[Interlude]

[Verse 3]

At the table of our Savior, no mouth will go unfed  
His children in the shadows stream in and raise their heads  
Oh give us ears to hear them and give us eyes that see  
For there is One who loves them  
I am His hands and feet

[Outro]

**For there is One who loves them**  
**I am His hands and feet**

**Part Two** (four guests come up during song – the five of us are seated on stools – person closest to me has the mic)

This church does an amazing job of going out into the world in Jesus' name and doing little things in great love in a way that really make a difference.

I've invited four people to join me on the platform this morning to talk about what it looks like to make a difference in the world in Christ's name in the areas of our community and world where they are involved. I could easily have invited up forty of you.

I have two questions for each of you – one about how your faith connects with your particular area of ministry in our community, and the other about specific opportunities to serve in that area.

Diane Shockey, you are our new liaison and volunteer coordinator at Murdock Elementary School, a public school in Lafayette that we've had a partnership with for more than a decade. How would you describe the way your faith informs your engagement in this area?

We are a resource-rich church family, and we have so much to offer to others in need in our community. I find I'm really impacted by passages like I Timothy 6.17-19, which says:

<sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. <sup>18</sup> Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. <sup>19</sup> In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Daniel Sampson, you and your wife Emily have been actively involved in advocacy for at-risk kids, you've done some beautiful work in foster care and adoption, and most recently you've been helping to establish the new Isaiah 117 House to help give kids a safe place when they are first taken from unsafe homes. How about you? How does your faith inform the way you're involved with kids?

God has given Emily and me a real heart for kids. We're discovering that Jesus has a heart for kids too. You're familiar with the story in Luke 18.15-17 where it says:

People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

We're also really challenged by passages like Matthew 18.6, where Jesus talks about the severe justice that will come on those who "cause even one of these little ones to stumble." That passage makes it really clear that God doesn't just

love kids, but he desires advocacy for them and protection, and he will bring justice when they are mistreated.

Duease Johnson, you serve alongside Franki Kung, Alex Pothén, Alice Wang and others as a volunteer in the World Welcome ministry, which extends hospitality to international students. How does your faith inform your involvement in that area?

My life has been made so rich by forming friendships with people from other parts of the world. And I realize that each of those friendships and interactions with internationals are a foretaste of the future! Revelation 7.9 says God is creating a new humanity, which will be made up of “people from every nation, tribe, people, and language.”

God makes it clear that he has a heart for foreigners who are in our midst. Leviticus 19.34 says, “The foreigners residing among you must be treated as native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

Julie Williams, you have served on Covenant’s staff for several years as our Missions Coordinator, and you are also the new chair of our mission partnership team. How would you answer that question?

From the beginning of the scriptures to the end it’s clear the passion that God has for the whole world to know Him and love him. And in Matthew 28.18-20 he invites us to join him in the task of making him known:

<sup>18</sup> Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

The more I learn about God’s heart for the world, the more my own heart for the world grows.

(mic being passed back the other direction)

A second question for each of you: what are some specific ways that someone in the Covenant family could make a difference in Christ’s name in the ministry area you’re part of?

Julie: World Missions

Certainly learning about and praying for our mission partners and what God is doing around the world, but also specifically praying about joining us on one of the upcoming short term mission trips to serve our partners in Mexico in January and March. There’s an information meeting right after the service today if you’re interested in exploring that possibility.

Duease: World Welcome

There are lots of great opportunities to practicing hospitality and build friendships at World Welcome every Sunday during second service, plus we have a really big need for help with our huge Thanksgiving meal on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Last year we served almost a hundred international students, and we could really use some extra hands making and serving food!

Daniel: serving at-risk children

We don't have a formal ministry team for this area, but there are lots of ways to make a difference, such as jumping into serving with Matrix, or getting trained as a CASA volunteer, or exploring foster care or adoption, and certainly helping support our efforts to get Isaiah 117 House up and running.

Diane: Murdock

This year, after two years of limited opportunities because of Covid, God has opened up lots of significant opportunities to connect with students, such as reading during school and tutoring after school and serving as recess monitors. Another easy way to take a first step is to take part in trunk or treat on October 25.

Talk to any of these men and women after the service or learn more on the eNews or our website.

Before I come to the last part of my message, I want to circle back around to Alan Kreider's book *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. I thought this observation was incredibly profound. He writes:

What the outsiders saw [when they looked at the church] was not their worship. It was their [their way of life]. According to early eye witnesses, the outsiders looked at the Christians and saw them energetically feeding poor people, [providing for the burial of those who died], caring for boys and girls who lacked property and parents, and being attentive to aged slaves and prisoners.

They interpreted these actions as "works of love." And they said, "*Vide*, look! How they love one another!" They did not say, "*Aude*, listen to the Christians' message"; they did not say, "*Lege*, read what they write." Hearing and reading were important, and some early Christians worked to communicate in these ways too. But we must not miss the reality: the pagans said look! Christianity's truth was visible; it was embodied and enacted by its members. 61

What do outsiders see when they look at your life?

### Part Three



As we close this morning's message and this fall kick off sermon series, I want to take just a minute to step back and look at the whole again.

Anybody here know who *lost* the Super Bowl at the end of the 1960 season?

The Green Bay Packers.

### Image of Football



A few months later, at the start of training camp for the 1961 season, Vince Lombardi, the coach of the Packers, walked into the locker room with a football under his arm.

Then he held it up and said one of the most famous lines in sports: **“Gentlemen, this is a football.”**

There are all kinds of dimensions to the game, so many things they could have been focusing on as a team. But Lombardi wanted to bring them back to the fundamentals.

There are so many dimensions to the Christian life, so many things we could be focusing on as a church family. But each fall, at the start of our new “season,” we try to stop and remember together the fundamental things that stand at the heart of the Christian life.

That's why we've been taking the time to walk through this series on our calling as a church and the ways we believe that calling will express itself, showing up in visible, tangible ways in our life as a church family.

We have hoped that this whole series would be a time for each of you to have a conversation with the Lord about where he is encouraging you and where he is inviting you.

So, to remind you again,

### **Our calling as a church family:**

Live a life of love. [and that has three dimensions to it]  
 Love Jesus.  
 Love his people.  
 Pour out his love on the world.

Is there a place here where you are hearing the Lord's invitation?

His encouragement?

His challenge?

Is there something that needs to decrease in your life so there can be room for the things of God to increase?

And here are the ways Scripture leads us to expect our calling to live a life of love will express itself in our individual lives and in our life together.

### **Six expressions of our calling:**

Love Jesus

- worshiping daily and weekly
- studying Scripture regularly

Love His People

- participating in Christ centered relationships
- using our gifts to serve the church family

Pour Out His Love on the World

- loving our (literal) neighbors
- making a difference in the world

Let's keep this up for a minute . . .

As you look at this expanded expression of our calling as a church, and as you think about your own life, where do you feel encouraged? Where do you see signs of strength and maturity in your spiritual life?

And where do you see gaps? Where are some places that might need to be developed?

Where might things need to shift around in your life to make more room for the most important things? What do you need to say no to so you can say yes to Him?

What's a next step you can take?

How has God been speaking to you this fall? What is His invitation to you?

In the end, the Christian life is not what we do for God. It is cooperating with the life that God wants to live in and through us.

Lord, you are waiting for us with open arms. As we run to you, we open our arms, our hearts, our lives to you as well . . .

Closing Song: God so loved

Come all you weary  
Come all you thirsty  
Come to the well  
That never runs dry  
Drink of the water  
Come and thirst no more

Well, come all you sinners  
Come find His mercy  
Come to the table  
He will satisfy  
Taste of His goodness  
Find what you're looking for  
For God so loved  
The world that He gave us  
His one and only  
Son to save us  
Whoever believes in Him  
Will live forever

Bring all your failures  
Bring your addictions  
Come lay them down  
At the foot of the cross  
Jesus is waiting there  
With open arms  
See His open arms