

Hands in Service: Loving Our City: Matthew 25:34-40; James 2:14-17

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. I have a really wonderful announcement to make. You know, God works in some amazing and incredible ways.

Sometimes when we are sick and we are... we ask God for healing. We ask for prayer.

In times when we're vulnerable, or in times where we just... we want God's comforting and healing hand to be with us.

And so I just found out, can you stand? Just at least stand. You got... you were testing to see if there's cancer, and you found out that there...

[1 : 07] I'm cancer-free. That you are cancer-free. And I want to take this moment to just give a round of applause. Praise God.

Because you know, the question that comes up is, does God continue to heal? Does God continue to transform and restore? And the answer is yes.

How God heals us? Well, that's the great mystery of how God works in our lives. God is the great transformer. And he does such wonderful things in our lives.

And I just wanted to just really take a moment for that before our time. Let's pray and we'll begin our time of our sermon. And Father, we thank you for this time, this opportunity for bringing us here today.

You are the sovereign God. You are the God of miracles. And you do so much for us. You are a holy God.

[2 : 10] You are strong and you are mighty. You sent your Son, Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, to change the course of history, to provide salvation in believing in Jesus.

And we ask that you're with us this morning. We ask that you may tug at our shirts, that you may call us to know you, to grow in you, and to do good in your holy name.

We certainly are a needy people and we rely on you for everything. I'm reminded of that Psalm 65, that message that we did where that verse says that, you visit the earth and you water it.

And oh, how you cultivate and care for the earth, much like how you care for us. And you are with us in this place as we are going into our message, hands in service, loving our city.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray and we all say together, amen. You know, these past couple of weeks, we have been talking about how important it is for us as the church to build community together, to exhibit the love of Christ to others.

[3 : 39] I mentioned that before that children are the future of this church and the future of Christianity. As the body of Christ, it is critical that we teach children diligently.

What do we teach them? We teach them life skills, but we teach them about the Lord. We teach them about Jesus Christ and the wonderful miracles that he performed.

We teach Bible stories just as Noah's Ark or Sodom and Gomorrah, which is a pretty hard one to teach, but it's necessary to teach.

We teach about who God is and that God loves us. It's one of the basics of Christianity that Jesus loves me. This I know for what?

For the Bible tells me so. And that's such a fundamental that we should learn as children if you don't know it. We should learn as adults. It's never too late to learn this simple truth.

[4 : 43] And I've also mentioned the importance of considering the empty chair, which in turn is our neighbor. Remember when I brought a chair over here and I asked, who is our neighbor?

It's a very good question, because how you may answer that may be different than how I may answer that. Who is literally your neighbor? Who's next door to you? Who are the people that you interact with on a day to day basis?

You know, God calls each and every one of us into a relationship with Him. The Lord calls us to believe in Him. Will you respond to that call?

We are called to come to know the Lord and to be on a journey, a journey of growing as Christians into the men and the women that God has designed us to be.

We're not saved by what we do, rather we are saved by belief. It's one of my favorite passages in scripture, John chapter 6 verse 47, where Jesus is saying, truly I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

[5 : 52] And we will be going over two, two scripture readings, but before we do, I want to share a story with you and it's amazing how technology is getting so much better.

I said put a downtown city in Southern California and that's what the technology made. You know, I love technology, but it gets a little scary if I'm being honest here.

That looks a little too... It's that borderline, right? Between reality and fantasy, if you will. But I use this image as to kind of make you think of this story.

So I want to share this story with you. You know, sometimes God moves us to act or to do something that is uncomfortable, even when we don't want to.

Sometimes we're so busy, we want to go about our way, we have places to go and people to see, but God wants us to act in a certain moment, at a certain time.

[6 : 51] Years ago, when Amber and I were dating, when we were back in California, you can see the palm trees, I don't think they do very well here. We were back in California and we were out on a date.

This was before children, this was before we got married. We were in the city of Fullerton and we had fun. You know, we were out having a nice dinner and just really enjoying each other's company.

Now, I don't remember where we went. In fact, all I know is that the date went well, but there's one point that I... There's one thing that I do remember at the end of this date, this evening with Amber. You know, it was getting late and I had to take Amber back to where she was living. It was going to be a drive. I'm like, okay, it's getting a little late, it's time to go.

And I remember I was heading towards the car and there was this homeless man who was sitting there and he was wanting not just money, but he was wanting a conversation.

[7 : 54] And that was something I wasn't ready for at that time. I thought, I gotta go home. I gotta take Amber back. I gotta have to do something here.

And it was in this moment where I did the wrong thing and I didn't pay attention to him. All the man wanted was just to talk about how he had lost his family and how really there was so much loss and pain and suffering that happened in his life.

But there was something about him. This was over 10 years ago. And I still remember this man, that there was something about him that I felt deep within me to talk to him, but I was so stubborn as to not converse with him.

I look back at that moment as a time that I should have listened to him. I should have spent time with him. And I am convinced that I should have shared who Christ is with this man.

We ended up driving and it bothered me so much that I told Amber, can we go back to that guy? Can we turn around? We went back. I couldn't find him.

[9 : 14] And I drove for 10, 15 minutes looking for him. And that made an impact on my life. Why did I not converse with him?

Why did I not act in that moment? And I tell this story as a reminder to myself and maybe as an encouragement to you that if God calls you to speak to someone or to give someone a dollar, sometimes God will move you to act, to be present.

What if I did something different? What if I had shared who Christ is? What if I just listened to him? Would the outcome be different? I don't know. But what I do know is that in that moment when I did the wrong thing, it made an impact on me that now that will never happen again.

If someone really needs my time, I need to stop what I'm doing and I need to pay attention. You never know who God will send your way. I don't know if the man's saved.

I don't know where he is. I don't, quite frankly, I don't know who he is. But I pray for him. And I pray that God will work in his life.

[10 : 33] He is a man. I call him the man in Fullerton. He's someone that I pray for even to this day. And what a profound impact that people can have on this.

And with that, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever had an experience where you were called to help someone?

Have you ever had a moment like that? Have you ever had a moment where you just felt moved and you didn't understand why you wanted to help out? It could be a family member.

It could be a stranger. It could be someone in your church. It could be anyone. Have you ever felt that calm? If you've ignored it, how did that feel?

But if you listen to it, how did that feel? Because sometimes God just pulls at you at his timing. You know, it'd be so nice if we could make an appointment with God and say, all right, you know, at one o'clock I'd like to go help, but that's not how God's timing works.

[11 : 40] And so I'd like to go with our scripture reading. It's going to be from Matthew chapter 25 verse 34 through 40 in your ESVQ Bible.

It's going to be on page 988.

Verse 34. So Matthew 25 verse 34 through 40. Then the king will say to those on the right, Come, you who are blessed by my father, Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, For I was hungry and you what?

You gave me food, right? I was thirsty and you what? You gave me drink. I was a stranger and you what?

You welcomed me. I was naked and you ignored me. No. And you what? You clothed me.

[13 : 05] I was sick and you said whatever. No, you what? You visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.

Then the righteous will answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry? When did we feed you or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothed you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? The king will answer them. Truly, I say to you, as you did, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

And what? Powerful versus powerful words from scripture here. This verse is a part of when Christ is teaching about his final judgment, where he's talking about that the righteous will inherit the kingdom.

These are people that have exhibited the love of Christ. They have served the least of these. And this is building upon the foundation of salvation.

[14 : 16] Do you realize that when you believe in the Lord, you will be saved and from that salvation, you are called to grow and to act?

In other words, by following these commands, it's an outward expression of being saved, right? From the foundation, from that foundation of salvation, building upon the salvation which you have received.

To inherit the kingdom, it speaks of living out God's kingdom here on earth. It speaks of experience with what God has to offer and sharing it with others.

It's exhibiting the love of Christ with others. It's loving one another just as Christ has loved us. It is important that Christ is our righteousness.

And when Christ speaks of the righteous inheriting the kingdom, by believing in Christ, we are declared righteous in the eyes of God.

[15 : 20] Now works in of themselves, they do not save you. But we are saved by faith, by believing in Christ. And because of this, you can do good in the name of the Lord.

Because we are saved by grace through faith, doing good is a response to salvation. Do you respond to the salvation that you have received from Christ?

How do you respond? These verses that speak of the least of these is so powerful. And the question comes up to us today is, who are the least of these?

In your life, in our church's life, in the city of Ontario or in the Treasure Valley, who would be the least of these? Well, these people are vulnerable in our world.

And these are people who are in need and Christ calls us to care for them. These verses speak of when you do good for those in need, it's as though you are serving Christ himself.

[16:29] That's hard. Because sometimes we don't want it, right? Sometimes we don't. Do I really have to help feed those in need? Do I really have to exhibit the love?

Yeah, absolutely. In the same way that God loves you, you are called to share in that love. Well, how do you share in that love?

Well, obviously we share in the gospel message. We do this also through service, these acts of kindness. And there's a question that I have that I'd like to bring up as we are going here is, do you see Christ in the people that you interact with?

Because when we're talking about the least of these, it's thinking of, okay, Christ is saying, when you've done these to me, it's as though you're doing it to me. So it's as though you're seeing Christ in people.

That's really difficult at times. But it changes the way that you look at people. It changes the way that you interact with people.

[17:40] If we are all made in the image of God, why do we exhibit hatred towards one another? Think about that. Do you see Christ in those who are in need?

When we think about it, we are all sinners that are in need of a Savior. We all need Jesus. And when we share in the love of Christ, they will know who we are by our action, by our words, by our love.

It's not from my glory. It's sharing God's love. It's showing people who Christ is. And this should be a call for us to share in the word of God, the gospel message, but also for us to serve one another.

Let us now go to our second passage in the book of James. I'm going to put this on the screen here. It's going to be James chapter 2, verses 14 through 17 on page 1212.

It's easier to say than 1212. It is...

[19:06] 1200.

1200.

This is the famous passage that says that faith without works is dead. What good is it, my brothers? If someone says he has faith but does not have works, can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed, there it is, the clothing again, right? Or lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, go in peace, be warmed and filled without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

Right? There's words that need to be spoken, but there's also action with that. So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead.

[20:15] And I bring this up because reading this on the surface, it's very difficult. It's harsh language. It would appear that you need to do good in order to be saved in the eyes of God, but that's simply not the case because James is writing to brethren, the brothers, who are those who already believe in the Lord.

James is mentioning that in having faith, right? In having that foundation in Christ, you are building upon it. It is a response in receiving salvation.

I realize this verse is a very misquoted one. Again, because James is speaking to existing Christians, existing believers.

This is not creating a works-based system here. So in having faith, be moved to act, be moved to do good, works are but a byproduct of salvation.

And in order to understand this verse, I want you to think of the idea of having a dead or living faith, an active or an inactive faith. That's a better way of explaining this because you can have dead faith, which means that you believe in the Lord, but you're not doing anything.

[21:33] But if you have an active faith, it means you are actively participating as a person who is part of the body of Christ and going out and following what Scripture says, what Scripture calls for us to do.

That would be a better way of explaining a very difficult passage to people. Do you have an active faith or do you have a dead faith?

There's still faith there, but is it ongoing, right? Is it something that you are living out or is it something that you're not doing?

It would make sense that James is speaking about the difference between an active or even a dormant faith. I know it's saying a dead faith is very harsh, but let's think about it.

It's a call for you to do good in the name of the Lord. And these two verses that I'm sharing with you from Matthew and from James, they're not contradictions.

[22 : 34] They certainly are verses though that are difficult. It's okay to have verses that are difficult to wrestle with. Even as your pastor, I will tell you there are verses that I struggle with.

There are times when I'm trying to figure out what in the world Paul, what do you mean by this? Okay, Proverbs? That's wisdom there, but it's a lot of depth in such jam-packed, you know, one-liners.

It's okay to wrestle with Scripture. That wrestling is to help mold you to become a more mature Christian.

It's just like how we talk about this idea of having milk, drinking from milk and going to solid food. Now, for those of us who have children, do you give your newborn a steak?

You know, and if you have, then maybe we should talk after. But you give them formula or you give them milk from the mother.

[23 : 44] You give them something that is suitable and as they're growing, I don't want a bottle anymore. I want orange juice. I want cookies. I want whatever, right?

But as they're growing, they're switching their palate, right? It's the same way for us that we are to grow and to have that active faith.

It's okay to wrestle with Scripture. It's okay to wonder. And quite honestly, sometimes we don't have all of the answers.

We have the most important answers in Scripture, but certainly it's okay to wonder. When I get to heaven, look, I know I'm going to ask Jesus a lot of questions about some of these verses.

And that's okay. It's part of your spiritual walk in knowing the Lord, that God will mold you and transform you in time.

[24 : 40] Passages from James is talking about being living and active, right? Active in our faith. When you tell someone that you love them, right?

Don't you want your actions to match up with your words? If I tell my wife I love her and I don't ever do acts of service, or I don't ever get her flowers, or I don't give her kisses on the forehead or whatever it is, eventually you kind of wonder, right?

Same thing with children. I just say, you know I love you is different than, hey, I love you. And hey, I'm going to spend time with you or whatever it is.

I know there's love languages and theories of how to exhibit love with children and your spouse. But the point is, if you just say it and there's no backing to it, causes you to wonder.

So when you commit to something, you want to make sure that your word has weight to it. It's much like saying you love someone or you're committing to someone.

[25 : 50] There is a call to live out your faith. I want you to keep that in mind. And so in looking at these scripture verses, I want to put this up on the slide.

So we have the 3e pathway, right? Number one, this is all from scripture. Number one, believe in the Lord and be saved.

Number two, be on a path of growing in faith. And number three, do good in the name of the Lord. It's just a simple process.

It's three steps, right? I hate saying that, it's three steps in becoming a Christian, but really it's one step and that's believing in the Lord. But in that, it's a spiritual journey.

The spiritual journey to come to know who the Lord is and growing upon being saved. That we are called to be on this path.

[26 : 52] Let us be encouraged to be believers that are focused on the next generation. Let us focus on young families. Let us focus on children.

And let us be a light in the community. Let us love one another just as Christ has loved us. I've been speaking about how we as the church, we are going to be focusing on having community classes for children.

And I've also been mentioning how we should be encouraged as the body of Christ to be present in the community. Being good, godly believers who are leaders.

That's a call for us. In addition to these community classes, I'm working with Amber and the staff and working with the board to create a way that we can love Ontario.

Love this city. Coming alongside with existing community projects and being present with them. It's not about our glory, it's about God's glory.

[27 : 57] And it's about serving Him with gladness. So let us think of how we can be a part of this body of Christ that is active in their faith.

I would like to encourage each and every one of you to find a way where you can connect, where you can commit to be a part of this community, but to be active in your faith.

Do you remember when you were a child? Do you remember the love that people shared with you in coming to know the Lord?

For those of us who grew up in the church, you may have an image or a thought of how people were, how they loved you.

They took care of you and how you came to know the Lord as a young child and there were people who were there, let's do the same thing.

[28 : 59] Let's be present with the next generation. Because my friends, when we think of the next generation, millennials, Gen Zers, Generation Alpha and Gen Beta, I don't know about that.

I don't like that name and I would certainly hate being called Gen Beta, but the point is, is young people need to know the Lord.

And they're constantly bombarded by what? Technology, social media, everybody has an opinion. Everybody has things to say and a lot of people are saying a whole lot of nothing.

But the thing is, let us be the light to the community. Let us share in the love of Christ our testimony, stories of how God has moved in our life.

This story that I've shared about the man in Fullerton, the homeless man in Fullerton at that, is not an easy story to tell. It really affected me and it still does.

[30 : 02] I mean, just talking about it, even now I still think, gosh, I should have, I should have, what a could have should have, but I didn't. And now moving forward, I'm going to do differently.

But let this be a call for you to serve the community.

But first and foremost, believe in the Lord and be saved. Beyond a path, that's why you have these images here, right? Encouraging a prayer to know, asking Jesus into their heart, believing in him, right?

For some of us, it's the sinner's prayer. Think of the thief on the cross who says, Jesus, remember me. And Christ says, you will be with me in paradise.

See how simple that is? Encourage to believe in the Lord. Encourage to be a part of the body of Christ, to be a part of the church equipped.

I mean, I like to think he's studying scripture and I like to think they're all studying scripture as a representation, but opening the word of God and letting God work in and through your life and engage.

[31 : 09] Serving the community, sharing in your testimony, sharing the gospel message. Let us consider who has not heard the good news of the gospel. Let us consider those we can serve and those we can invite into the church.

Part of it is the invitation here, but part of us is also going out into the world. And as we go forth in this month of January, let us be active in our faith.

As we close, I want to mention something to you, which I, in my study and preparation for this sermon, was something that really impacted me.

I want us to reflect on how many of us know the story of Esther. In Esther chapter 4, verses 14 through 17, Esther was facing this critical decision, and she was reminded by Mordecai that perhaps she has been placed in her position for such a time as this.

This call was specific to Esther, but in the same way, it is a story that we can think about in our lives of sometimes God places us in certain moments for certain times, for certain seasons, much like how God places us in a situation to speak to certain people.

[32 : 36] Sometimes we meet people and they give us an answer to something we've been wondering about the Lord for a while, and you're like, where did that come from? Sometimes God places us in such times.

And I believe that God has placed all of us here for such a time as this to make a difference in the lives of the next generation, in the context of our church and in the context of our community.

And Esther was, she responded with courage. She called for a fast and prepared to approach the king. And this story, it's found in your notes here.

It shows the importance of boldly stepping out into faith, and it recognizes that in her unique position, she made a difference, much like how we are placed in our own unique position to make a

difference for the Lord.

And it reminds me that we too are placed for such a time as this. Consider how you can boldly go out to love and to serve the Lord.

[33 : 47] And I want you to think about that as we close. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for always being there for us. We thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life.

We thank you for allowing us to gather here today and to hear the message. We pray that today that your word will dwell richly in us, that it will move us to act, but also that it will transform us, that it will heal us, and that it will show us your power and your glory.

You are the light of the world. You are that light that shines in the darkness. We pray that lives are transformed and that people who don't know you will believe in you, that people will grow in faith in believing you, that believing first and then growing, and that people will go out.

New Christians, Christians that are maturing, will be encouraged to go out and do good in your holy name. Lead us and guide us as we go out boldly to serve your church, but also to serve this community.

We are so much better when we all work together for your holy name, for a house that is united.

That is what we want to be, united in faith, just as we know in Scripture that a house divided cannot stand, may we be united and stand firm on the truth of your word.

[35 : 39] Let us intentionally focus on the next generation and we pray that in everything we do, that it will be according to your will, that you will lead and guide us where you want us to go.

May we follow in your footsteps. It is in Jesus' name that we pray.