

To Help the Powerless

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[0 : 00] You all have a seat. We're going to be returning to John chapter 5 for a second time this week. Let me begin with a word of prayer as we prepare to hear God's word to us this morning.

God, open our eyes, incline our hearts, give us a desire to hear your word, to have it planted, rooted deep in us, and to grow.

Lord, we are people who, you know, I will lead us in confessing that I have not done well, we have not done well in being people who give help.

We often fail to give the help that others need. Sometimes we give the help they want, but rather than the help that they need, sometimes we don't give help at all, either because we don't know how or because we have competing priorities, other things that we place above loving you and loving our neighbor as ourself.

Lord God, I ask that may the name of Jesus Christ become honored as we become like him. As our lives start to take the shape of his own, our character and personality start to look like his.

[1 : 19] Lord, make us people who are known, who truly live up to that name of Christians, little Christs, people who resemble their Lord and Savior, so the world may come to know him and to recognize him and to honor his name.

Amen. Okay. I love starting with surveys. Let's do another one. Show of hands. How many of you right now, how many of you have friends who are going through some hard stuff?

Friends who are going through some hard stuff? Show of hands. All right. If you didn't raise your hand, there's a, let's just put, let's just be frank here.

If you didn't raise your hand, it's probably because you don't have any friends. Okay. Some of you are like, oh no. You know, I know big, big, big, that's tough news, right?

If you really, really know the, the, the more that I get to know people, understand what's going on in their lives, the more I understand that a lot of us put on a good face, but underneath we're going through hard, hard stuff.

[2 : 26] And you have people in your life right now that are going through hard things. And so if you have, if you are moved, if the Holy Spirit is moving in your heart, moving you to love that person, you're probably wondering, how do I help my friend?

How do I help my family member? How do I help my neighbor? How do I love my neighbor as myself? Well, last week you and I heard what we needed to hear when we're the one who is suffering, when we're the one who, you know, you could call yourself a victim of difficult circumstances.

And then I promised that this week we would talk about what to do if you're the one who is helping the one who suffers. So this week we're going to shift perspectives. We're going to see how God calls us to help others who are suffering.

And so here's the big idea right off, right at the start. Big idea is this. For those in difficult circumstances, God calls you to attend to their affliction and affirm their agency.

For those in difficult circumstances, God calls you to attend to their affliction and affirm their agency. That's what we learn from Jesus Christ.

[3 : 40] That's what we learn as we go back again to John chapter five, verses one through 18. So if you're using one of the blue Bibles or usher's handout, you want to be on page 890, page 890, John chapter five, verses one through 18.

And I'd like you to see the words for yourself. I'll follow along in your copy of scripture as I read it for us. John chapter five, verses one through 18.

After this, there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate, a pool in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.

In these lay a multitude of individuals, blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, do you want to be healed?

[4 : 51] The sick man answered him, sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. And while I am going, another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, get up, take up your bed and walk.

And at once the man was healed and he took up his bed and walked. Now, that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.

But he answered them, the man who healed me, that man said to me, take up your bed and walk.

They asked him, who is the man who said to you, take up your bed and walk?

Now, the man who had been healed did not know who it was for Jesus had withdrawn as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you are well. Sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you. the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

[6 : 12] And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, my father is working until now and I am working.

This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.

This is the word of the Lord. Now, last week, we learned from these verses, this passage, that if you are the one who is suffering, then God calls you to acknowledge your affliction and to accept your agency.

So, it really should be no surprise to come back and to find that if you are helping others who are suffering, then God calls you to, first, attend to their affliction and, second, affirm their agency.

But then there is also a third aspect of help that I am going to get to at the end of the sermon. Leave you hanging a little bit for a while. There is a third thing you need to be aware of if you are going to help the powerless as God calls you to do.

[7 : 28] So, you know, that is mystery box number three. You are going to have to wait to find that out to the end. So, I will keep you hanging. We are going to first look at that first aspect of helping the powerless.

Let us look at verse 6. Last week, we saw how Jesus does two things first before he speaks to this disabled man. We read here that Jesus saw him and that Jesus knew his situation.

He sees, he knows. So, here Jesus models the first aspect of help, the first way to help the powerless. Attend to the affliction of your neighbor.

Attend to the affliction of your neighbor. So, let us talk about those two things, seeing and knowing. We will talk about seeing first because this is far from the only time that Jesus is said to see or to look at a person first before he acts.

This is, in fact, Jesus, it seems to be his normal way of relating to people. Jesus takes in the person, the situation that the person is in.

[8 : 44] Jesus studies them. He becomes a student of the person. And so, a fairly typical example of this is in Luke chapter 7 when Jesus encounters a widow who has just lost her only son.

And Jesus doesn't just barge into the funeral procession, walk up and boom, raise your son to life. Here's how Jesus approaches her first. when the Lord saw her, when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, do not weep.

So, Jesus, first thing he does, the very first verb, he sees, he takes her in, and then his heart is moved with compassion, moved toward her.

that movement of compassion brings her to her rather than leading him to just pass her by. Jesus knows what it means to attend to the affliction of your neighbor.

Jesus knows that their suffering is meant to be seen, not ignored. Their suffering is meant to be seen, not ignored. And so, for you and me, this means that before you speak, before you act to help, you ought to do some seeing and some listening first.

[10 : 13] Seeing and listening first. So, here's a common scenario. So, here you go. Husband's pro tip for marriage. Your wife comes to you with all the problems of her day, and what's the typical man thing to do?

Well, let me give you some advice on how to fix everything, right? Doesn't that go over really well? That goes over great. Well, here's the thing.

The step that you've skipped along the way is the step that Jesus does not skip. Jesus looks. Jesus listens. Jesus sees.

And he demonstrates the wisdom of Proverbs 18, verse 13. If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. If you try to fix the other person and their problems too quickly, before you take time to stop and listen, you risk doing one of two things.

So, first, you might risk losing the person you're trying to help. You know, they don't, turns out, other people don't want to feel like your personal project. People don't want to feel like, oh, I'm just a problem that my friend is trying to resolve so they can feel better and restore their own peace of mind.

[11:35] Nobody wants to feel that way. You'll lose the person. Second, you risk offering the wrong remedy for the problem. Imagine that you go to your physician and you've got a problem with, I don't know, with your knee or something and your physician starts, you start explaining the symptoms and how this came to be and about five seconds and the physician cuts you off and says, hey, that sounds like the knee problem I had last year.

Let me tell you what worked for me. Right? Don't be a bad physician. Be like the great physician, like Jesus.

Because Jesus knows that to help the powerless to attend to the affliction of your neighbor, their suffering is meant to be seen, not ignored. Now let's go back to John chapter five, verse six, and let's talk about how Jesus knew.

What did Jesus come to know? Well, he knew that the disabled man had already been there a long time. So Jesus took time to understand, to understand the man's predicament that he had been an invalid for 38 years.

That's the first thing John tells us about him. And Jesus takes that seriously. Jesus takes time to know, to ponder, to understand the man's circumstances before he acts.

[13:00] Jesus knows what it means to attend to the affliction of your neighbor. Jesus knows that their suffering is meant to be understood, not dismissed. Their suffering is meant to be understood, not dismissed.

So for you and me, this means that before you speak, before you act to help, you ought to do some knowing and some understanding first.

Know and understand what's my neighbor gone through in the past. What are they going through now? What are they expecting to go through in the future?

Here's what happens if you dismiss someone's suffering rather than understanding it. You end up saying dumb things like this. Well, you know, in the grand scheme of things, it's no big deal, is it? You know, other people have it worse. Suck it up, buttercup. Or maybe you're not, maybe you're a little more diplomatic than that, so you just sort of change the subject.

[14:11] You start, you know, talking about the weather. You know, oh man, how about that rain? Sure is soggy out there. Woo! Crisis averted. Back to normal. Here's what, here's what you say.

Here's instead what you say when you want to understand someone's suffering. You start speaking to them with things like this, you know. What's it like to go through that? Tell me more.

You said this. Could you tell me what you mean by that? The compassion of Jesus shows up when he learns, when he understands what people are going through.

And that's what sets Jesus apart. Makes him so different from the religious leaders because a few verses down, they're going to look at this man and all they see is a man, oh, he is disobeying our Sabbath traditions.

They are not interested in understanding why he's carrying his mat around. They're not interested in understanding the man's circumstances. All they see is a man who is being disobedient to them and their traditions.

[15:16] Jesus knows that to help the powerless to attend to the affliction of your neighbor, their suffering is meant to be understood, not dismissed. Now, let's move on to the second aspect of help.

Let's move to the second way to help the powerless. Compassion has moved you toward your neighbor. Alongside that compassion, there needs to be a wisdom that compels your neighbor to action.

Pure compassion by itself will not help people. There needs to be a wisdom that accompanies it and tempers it. Affirm the agency of your neighbor. Affirm the agency of your neighbor.

So Jesus, he refuses to let this disabled man think of himself as, oh, a passive victim. A man to whom everything just happens.

A man whose life is entirely at the mercy of other people. Oh, they've been terrible to me. Look how they failed me. They hate me. They're awful. I'm suffering. Jesus refuses to let this man degrade himself into something less than a human being created in the image of God.

[16 : 34] Something less than a person with real choices, real agency. Jesus speaks to the man three times and each time he affirms the man's agency.

So he does it in three ways. First, Jesus asks the man a question here in verse 6 and here's the question. Do you want to be healed?

Do you want to be healed? You know what? Jesus actually starts by giving the man the opportunity to express what he wants. Jesus gives the man the opportunity to say, yes, I want to be healthy again.

Or on the other hand, no, I'm comfortable with my life as it is. And if you think, man, there's no way anyone would say no, I don't want to be healthy.

Hey, if you think there's no way anyone would say no, come hang out in my office sometime when I'm counseling people. people say no to health and wholeness all the time.

[17 : 39] Health in their bodies and souls and relationships. They say no if it means losing a way of life that they can manage themselves.

A way of life, you know, that seems to be working for me so far. Don't assume that you know what someone really wants. Jesus knows what it means to affirm the agency of your neighbor.

Here's what you have to do. Draw out their real desires. Draw out their real desires. There are a lot of ways to draw out your neighbor's real desires.

You can begin with questions like this. Hey, what are you wanting right now? That's the question that Jesus asks. What are you wanting right now?

What would make your day? What would feel like life to you right now? What's the most difficult, what's the most unbearable part of all of this?

[18 : 46] What are you talking to God about? How can I pray for you? It's really important to ask these questions. I've found when I ask them sometimes the thing that's really weighing on a person is nothing like I expected.

They might be suffering. I found sometimes I'll talk to someone who's going through a lot of suffering and I'll ask them what's weighing on you about this? How can I pray for you? And they'll say it's actually my kids watching me go through this.

That's what's weighing on me right now. And I'm like whoa, I did not expect that. Sometimes the people you're helping have desires that even they don't recognize. Or desires they themselves have been dismissing and ignoring.

You need to draw out these desires. Only then can they be considered in light of God's word, God's purposes, God's promises. Jesus knows that to help the powerless, to affirm the agency of your neighbor, you must draw out their real desires.

Now let's move on to the second way that Jesus affirms the man's agency. This man has been complaining about all the ways he's been ill-treated.

[20 : 01] Pretty much whenever this man opens his mouth, it's always to assign the agency to other people. How they're treating me, what they did to me, what they told me to do.

This man has been complaining about all the things that, all the ways people have not treated him well. And Jesus responds in verse 8 by issuing a series of commands. Just really quick, bang, bang, bang.

Jesus appeals directly to the man's will. He tells the man, get up, take up your bed, and walk. And in verse 9, this is the one time in the story that the man accepts his own agency, and look what happens.

We have the most wonderful moment in this whole story, the highlight of this whole encounter. At once, the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Stunning, jaw-dropping moment. Jesus pivots from listening to the man to then summoning him to action.

[21 : 06] Jesus is not content with merely being a listening and understanding guy. Jesus knows that in order to love your neighbor, you must also affirm the agency of your neighbor, and here's what you have to do.

Second, emphasize their real choices. Emphasize their real choices. Last week, we heard that every human being has what we called free agency.

In other words, you have real desires, and you make real choices in accordance with those desires. Your words, your actions, they are not just some sort of mechanical result or consequence of other people's actions.

actions. Oh, so-and-so, they just make me so angry. No, they don't. They did something bad and you got angry. Your behavior comes from you, out of your own heart.

It is not a consequence of what other people do. That's the way Jesus thinks. that's the truth he instills in everyone he meets.

[22 : 24] Jesus never treats a single human being as though they are purely a victim, as though they have no agency. Now, the man's choice to get up and walk, it is something that is only made possible by the miraculous work of God, the healing power of the Son of God and of the Spirit of God.

that may not always be what takes place when you are helping someone. But even if there is no miraculous deliverance, the person you are helping still has choices.

They still have real choices in every circumstance they're in. An example of this, many of you are familiar with Joni Erickson-Tada.

She's an author and speaker. She became paralyzed, became a quadriplegic at age 17 due to a diving accident and to this day, many, many decades later, she still is.

For the first two years after her accident, Joni was absolutely devastated by it. Another author, Paul Miller, he describes this situation. He says, Joni slipped into a deep depression, even begging her best friend to help her commit suicide.

[23 : 42] suicide. She refused the story that God had permitted in her life. She wanted her old life back, serving as captain of the lacrosse team and riding her horse, tumbleweed, in shows.

And then Joni herself describes her mindset in those days and how she would retreat into her own fantasy world. Joni says, friends who had come to visit me had saddled horses and gone on a trail ride.

I was feeling sorry for myself comparing my lot to theirs. I closed my eyes and visualized a similar day a couple of years earlier. In my daydreams, I was again with Jason, riding horseback together toward the forest, across the fragrant meadows, stopping in a deserted place.

I relished memories of unrestrained pleasure, excitement, and sensual satisfaction. I was angry at God. I'd retrieve every tiny physical pleasure from my mind and throw it up to him in bitterness.

I couldn't accept the fact, God's will, they said, that I'd never do or feel these things again. But then a good friend and a mentor confronted her about her mindset, about her attitude, and he called Joni to embrace her suffering, to embrace the life story God had written for her.

[25 : 13] Joni repented. Joni took action. She embraced her agency in God's story. Joni put to death her old life by giving away her cherished hockey and lacrosse sticks and selling her beloved horse.

She stopped clinging to her past. God. Now, she wrote, I was forced to trust God. That's what accepting your agency looks like.

That's the sort of action you want to stir up in someone you're trying to help. You want to shift them from thinking like, you know, a passive victim of circumstance to someone who sees himself as, hey, I am an active participant, an active agent in this story that God is telling.

A story not about me, it's about his son Jesus Christ. A story he is the author, but I have real agency and he has invited me to participate in it. The story of redemption that God is working in the world and in the life of your neighbor.

So like the disabled man of John chapter five, the one you are helping, that person is a real human being with a real will.

[26 : 35] And if this person is truly a Christian, if the person is truly has the Holy Spirit empowering them, they can always, always, always choose to do what's right, choose to obey God.

Always. Jesus knows that to help the powerless, to affirm the agency of your neighbor, you must emphasize their real choices. So, now we come to the third and final way that Jesus affirms the

man's agency.

The man, he's been accused of breaking the Sabbath, and wrongly accused. Jesus interacts with the religious leaders all the time about what keeping the Sabbath really looks like.

But he's been accused by these religious leaders simply because he's defied their traditions, their ideas of what it looks like to keep the Sabbath. And this man, he has told them essentially, hey, I'm just following orders, you should focus on the other guy who gave the orders.

Taking the heat off of himself. This, each time he speaks, if it happened just once, maybe it would, you know, maybe it wouldn't be that big a deal, maybe we'd be reading too much into it, but it happens over and over.

[27 : 53] Every time this man opens his mouth, there's blame shifting going on. Other people, other circumstances, and now, well, I'm not the one who's really responsible for this, it's Jesus.

So, Jesus, who has kind of slipped away when the crowd formed, Jesus actually later finds the man, he seeks him out a second time.

In verse 14, so Jesus thinks this is a really big deal, and there's something here he needs to address. Verse 14, afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, see, you are well. Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. That is a pretty intense thing to say to a man who has suffered as much as this guy has suffered.

By modern cultural standards, Jesus is being a complete jerk. But Jesus is not a jerk. Jesus is willing to look like a jerk in order to tell the man what he needs to hear, in order to be honest with him.

[29 : 11] Jesus is making it clear to this man, you are a moral being. You are morally accountable to God, and you are liable to God's judgment for your behavior.

Jesus knows that if you really do want to love your neighbor, you must affirm the agency of your neighbor, and here's what you have to do. Remind them of their real responsibility.

Remind them of their real responsibility. That's a part of love too. If that's missing, you're not really loving to the fullest.

when you're trying to help someone who's suffering, at some point, and you'll notice Jesus doesn't do it right away. This is not usually something you're going to want to lead with.

The order is important. But at some point, you need to make it clear that the person you're helping is responsible, even in their suffering, for every word they speak, every action they take.

[30 : 10] Their situation, it is very serious. Their situation, it is significant. But it does not determine how they respond. They are not mechanical cogs at the mercy of fate.

They have agency. They are responsible to reveal what God is like by the way they respond to suffering. They are responsible to image God, to show the world what God is like.

That's how Jesus behaves when he suffers. Jesus himself, suffers greatly. In Hebrews chapter 4, we are told that Jesus, in every respect, has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus suffered tremendously physically, mentally, emotionally. He suffered great temptation towards sin throughout his life. And he reveals perfectly what God is like.

He obeys at every moment. Now, when it comes to reminding people of their real responsibility, let me give you one tip on this. Let's say that someone is suffering.

[31 : 19] Let's say that person sins with their words and their actions. Usually, it comes from a place of anger or a place of fear in their heart. Sometimes we want to think, okay, I need to correct them right now on this.

Sometimes it's better not to do it in the heat of the moment. Instead, it might be better and wiser to strike when the iron is cold, so to speak. Talk to them later, after the heat of the moment has subsided.

Jesus does that sometimes with his own disciples. Jesus sometimes corrects them after the emotion level has come back down a little bit. But, Jesus demonstrates how to live out Proverbs 15, verse 23.

To make an apt answer is a joy to a man and a word in season. How good it is. Sometimes there's a season to say it.

Sometimes it's not in the moment. If someone's flying into a rage, telling them right then and there, you need to stop it, you know, maybe come back later. But, Jesus doesn't let it go.

[32 : 26] He doesn't just come back. He doesn't just think, I'll come back later and then never really get around to it. Jesus doesn't indulge their sinful behavior. Jesus knows that to help the powerless,

to affirm the agency of your neighbor, you must remind them of their responsibility.

So, we've covered the first two aspects of help, two ways to help the powerless. You attend to the affliction of your neighbor and you affirm the agency of your neighbor.

But then I promised a third aspect, a third thing that you need to be aware of if you're going to help the powerless as God calls you to do. And I didn't say it up front because if I said it at the very beginning, you'd probably all walk out because this is the hard one to hear.

Here's the third thing. Anticipate affliction as you help your neighbor. Anticipate affliction as you help your neighbor. Expect that when you approach someone to help them, you will bring suffering upon yourself.

You will bring suffering upon yourself. Look at what happens to Jesus. The religious leaders are wanting to catch the guy who told this man to violate their traditions.

[33 : 37] Okay, who did this? Who told him this? Jesus could have really avoided a lot of trouble if what he did was, you know, kept a low profile, you know, kept quiet.

But Jesus does not do that. Jesus approaches the man again to remind him of his responsibility. Jesus does this and he knows full well what the consequences of his choice will be. Jesus loves this man.

Do you understand that? Jesus loves him and Jesus pays the price of love. In verse 15, we read, the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who healed him.

The man knows full well how they're going to respond. He knows they're not happy about this. And he rats Jesus out anyway. He throws under the bus the very man who healed him.

[34 : 50] Now this man is walking free. And in verse 16, Jesus is paying the price. This was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus.

Because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. And by the time we reach verse 18, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Jesus knows that to help the powerless, you must anticipate that you yourself will face affliction.

That affliction can come from a lot of different places. Maybe there are other people who don't like you to help those who are powerless. But the thing that often surprises us, and I see this the most often, the affliction will often come from the very person you are trying to help.

And Jesus moves toward the man anyway. And he has called you and me to do the same. To love our neighbor at great cost to ourselves.

Love always comes at a cost. That's why we don't do it. This is a radically countercultural demand. It cuts against the grain of a society that is obsessed with self-preservation, that is obsessed with self-care.

[36 : 11] And so before I urge you toward affliction, let me make one point. Because there's another side to this, a caveat I have to give you. Be willing to withdraw if love requires it.

Be willing to withdraw if love requires it. So there's a time and place for that. This is why we need so much wisdom. And we need to depend on the Lord so much.

Because there are times that Jesus says no. Jesus will do it in the next chapter in John chapter 6. He initially feeds a huge crowd with only five loaves of bread and two fish.

And afterward he withdraws from them. He withholds further help from them. And we'll see why in a moment.

There are times that love requires you to withdraw from someone that you had begun to help. And that is actually an act of love. There are two traps to avoid when approaching someone in love.

[37 : 13] First, do not enable sin through your help. Do not enable sin through your help. Sometimes you may think you are loving a person.

But really, all you are doing is just giving them the opportunity to sink themselves deeper into sin by manipulating you. Or sink themselves deeper into sin by entrenching their foolish behavior.

That is what is going on in John chapter 6. The people want Jesus to be the people they just want Jesus to be this victorious, triumphant military Messiah.

And to be a bread factory for them. And Jesus refuses to cooperate. I remember a friend of mine, and she was a dietician.

She told me a story about her work at a hospital. How a man she knew had been hospitalized for extreme overeating. He had life-threatening obesity.

[38 : 16] So he's in his hospital room, and they're trying to get him on a diet. And family members would visit this man in the hospital, and you know what? They would sneak in junk food for him to

eat.

They would sneak in junk food, and they would find like junk food in his room while the nurses are trying to bring his diet under control. These family members, they think they are loving him. They are not loving him. Their help is just enabling his gluttony. In the same way, it's possible that you may need to say no more to someone who is manipulating you and others, because that person is heaping up the wrath of God against them.

It is possible you may need to withdraw your support from the foolish behavior of people who are dishonoring themselves and bringing shame on the name of Jesus Christ.

Do not share in their guilt. Do not enable their sin. So don't enable sin through your help. Second, do not seek glory in being a savior.

[39 : 24] Do not seek glory in being a savior. Now, this is a common reason why would-be helpers, you know, they just burn themselves out. You've got the classic, girl likes the bad boy and convinced that she can save him, right?

But then there's people who feel compelled to help. You know, people who are pulled in a thousand, they see so many people in need, a thousand people. I can help in a thousand different ways. Or you see one person with enormous needs, and you just lose yourself in helping the single person.

And they do it because it gives me a sense of worth, a sense that I'm making a difference. There's a glory in saving people. It gives me meaning and fulfillment.

And this is a glory that is reserved for Jesus Christ alone. You have to stop playing Messiah. You have to start leading people to the Messiah. Do not seek glory in being a savior.

So back away from those two traps, the trap of enabling sin and the trap of seeking your own glory.

If you back away from these, you will become like Jesus, who knew when to say no.

[40 : 33] So be willing to withdraw if love requires it. So now I've gotten all that out of the way. Let me urge you now to do the very thing you don't want to do. Be willing to be hurt if love requires it.

Be willing to be hurt if love requires it. To help the powerless, do not expect that you will get anything in return.

They may have nothing to give you now. And they may have nothing to give you later. To help the powerless, expect that you will have to let go of your cherished conveniences and your comfortable lifestyle.

You will have to make some difficult sacrifices. You may have to give up your well-ordered way of life. To help the powerless, understand that the person you are wanting to help may lash out at you or falsely accuse you of evil or blame you for their problems.

A person trapped in a victim mentality will want endless, bottomless empathy and understanding while at the same time refusing to take responsibility. You can't know.

[41 : 50] You can't know that until you've already moved towards them. You can't know if the Lord will grant them repentance or not. Until you first move toward them in love. To help the powerless embrace the reality that death is at the center of love.

Death is the center of love. Love requires substitution. My life for your life. You may have to be in love. You may have to descend into sorrow, into shame, in order to help others find joy and life.

To help the powerless expect that this experience, it's going to put to death your old way of handling life. It's going to put to death the old patterns of your old life.

It's going to kill off, show as futile and powerless the old ways you have of coping with your feelings and your difficulties. They are not going to work anymore. The new way of love is going to burst your old wineskins.

To help the powerless, expect that you will need to develop a day-by-day, moment-by-moment, dependence on your heavenly Father.

[43 : 08] You are going to be crushed under the burdens of those you help unless you first pour out your heart before your Father in heaven, unless you draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

To help the powerless, expect that this momentary suffering, and here's the good news, it is going to lead to a glory, to a better life than you could have ever imagined.

Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, death led to a great glory, resurrection, ascension, seated at the right hand of God the Father.

And in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, as Carl read for us earlier, the Apostle Paul talks about this, do you remember this list of horrible, just soul-crushing things he has suffered and he has done it.

He says for the sake of the church in Corinth, and then he assures the people of this church, this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

[44 : 25] Anticipate that as you help your neighbor, as you enter into affliction, you are being made glorious. You are being refined like gold in a fire, purified so that what is pure and true will emerge.

And no matter how severe, no matter how prolonged your affliction may be, and Paul suffered so much, and then he says, oh, it's light, it's momentary, it's momentary, compared to the weighty and eternal glory that you will share with Christ.

You share this glory when your whole life story is one where you are walking the same road that Jesus walked, walking it in union with him, because you have entrusted yourself to him.

That is what faith is. You are sharing his descent into death, and you will share with him, moment by moment, and then in the next, in the world to come, you will share with him the power of his resurrection.

To help the powerless, you must first become a disciple of Jesus Christ, united to him by faith.

Believe in him, entrust yourself to him.

[45 : 46] Confess your sins, repent of them, and begin to embrace the cross. Begin to walk in his ways to help the powerless, just as he has done, just as he did for you.

Attend to the affliction of your neighbor. Affirm the agency of your neighbor. Anticipate affliction as you help your neighbor. And you do all it because Jesus has done it first for you.

He was crucified for you. He shed his blood for you. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We love because he first loved us. our God, our Father, we, who is sufficient for these things?

To really love people the way your son did is going to cost us everything. Lord, you know that as I myself have started to repent of my withdrawal and started moving towards people in love, that everything I feared comes to pass.

[47 : 01] The heaviness in my heart, the sorrow, and it's all worth it. There is a beautiful glory when we find that we ourselves do not have what it takes and we cast ourselves on you, Father.

We turn to you first when our thoughts and feelings overwhelm us. we turn to you first before we even mull it over. We turn to you first before we speak even to others.

And oh God, as we do that, may we become people who are known for helping the powerless, people whom others look at and say, this is what it must have looked like when Jesus did it. Lord God, I pray that our lives would be known for being filled with the glory of Christ.

Christ. And if, Lord, if there are those here who have not put their faith in Jesus Christ, may you show them what the law of love requires and show them their inadequacy and show them what we have been called to be and show them that they need the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Convict us all. Remind us of what real love looks like and let us settle for nothing less. Amen. Amen.

[48 : 28] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.