

Loving the Vulnerable

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 00] Well, if you've been here for a while, you know that I'm a huge fan of the musical Les Misérables.

Actually, I'm a bigger fan of the book. It's just as hard to slog through the 900 pages to get the richness of it. But if you're up for the task, it's totally worth your summer reading. But if you can't get to that, the musical captures many of the great themes.

And one of my favorite characters in it is Inspector Javert. Inspector Javert, who is known for his beautiful solo stars where he sings of his commitment to righteousness and law-keeping in the world and how he is called to enforce it.

But one of the interesting things about Inspector Javert that you may not know if you haven't listened to it as many times as I have is that Javert comes from a very interesting place.

In one scene where he has this conflict or this confrontation actually with Jean Valjean, the redemptive hero of the story. They're singing at the same time. And so it's really hard to hear what he's saying.

[1 : 19] But what you learn is that Javert was born in a prison. And that Javert was, as he grew up, he grew up to hate the place that he came from.

And his commitment to righteousness and his commitment to law-keeping. And the way that he did it, which becomes clearer and clearer throughout the story, with no understanding of grace or of mercy or of love or of anything but law-keeping as an end in itself.

He had a hatred for those who would break the law. He had a hatred for those who were like where he himself came from. He hated their weakness and he hated their sinfulness.

One of the reasons why he's such a powerful character is because I see that in my own self as well. That there are times when if I have a really strong and legalistic and critical attitude towards someone else, if I stop and think, one of the main reasons why I am like that is because I see in someone else a weakness or a vulnerability or a sin that I'm prone to and that I hate in myself.

[2 : 44] I remember back in 2005, the Lord brought this home to me. He unpacked my heart through a series of conflicts and difficult situations.

He said, Do you see that you are critical towards those closest to you at the very areas that you are weak and you want them to be stronger than they can ever be?

The Lord used that in my life in deep ways. But I wonder if you're like that too if you stop and think about it. Do you tend to hate in others the weakness you see in yourself?

Do you tend to condemn most loudly the sin that you're most prone to fall into? And when you do that, when I do that, what happens in our hearts?

Our hearts become hardened rather than become softened in compassion. When people call us on this and question us, we become defensive.

[3 : 52] We excuse. We justify ourselves. Sometimes we feel guilty that we have become critical and hard-hearted.

But in doing so, we also feel relief because it allows us to step back. Having condemned someone else, we can step back and say, okay, I don't have to have anything to do with you.

It's so easy for our hearts to turn on those who are weak and vulnerable. To turn on those who show their humanity and their frailty and their sinfulness.

What does God think of that? What do we think of that? What does God call his people to in that? Well, this brings us to our text this morning as we continue our series in Exodus.

We're going to be in Exodus 22, starting in verse 21. If you want to turn there in your pew Bibles, it's page 63. As you're turning there, let me remind you, Exodus is this grand story, God's deliverance in chapters 1 through 19, his deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt and bringing them to

the foot of Mount Sinai.

[5 : 13] Now he is revealing himself to them and making a covenant with them. And if you remember, a couple weeks ago, we looked at chapter 19, verses 4 through 6, where God comes to Moses and says, remember how I bore you out of Egypt.

Remember how I delivered you from slavery. Now I am calling you to be my people, to be a kingdom of priests in this world for me. And I will be your God and you will be my people. And this is the setup for then the giving of the Ten Commandments. These grand principles on how God's people are to live, to be a kingdom of priests, to reflect God in the world. And then as we keep going, we're now in this section in chapters 21 through 24, usually called the Book of the Covenant, which is this, again, dipping into God's instruction to his people about how to live as his people.

Last week, if you were here, Greg dove into a whole series of different sections in 20 and 21, that are in 21 and 22, I'm sorry, which were primarily case law, right?

[6 : 26] If this happens, this is how you ought to respond. One of the things that Greg said last week is that the laws were given to God's people so that they might know how to live in a fallen world.

We can always mistake, we can fall into the mistake of thinking that the laws were given to establish an ideal. And there are ideals and there are principles and there are characteristics of God and his people that come through the law.

But the law is actually given to people who live in a fallen world and who battle against sin. And what you'll see in our passage today is that that continues.

We're no longer in case law. We're now, the formal word that you read in seminaries is apodictic, which basically, as far as I can tell, means instructional law. This is what you ought to do, period. And as you walk through it, as we walk through it, you will see, and I just want you to give a tick now. As we read the passage in just a second, I want you to think, if there were no sin in the world, would we need these laws?

[7 : 35] So, I just want to put that in your mind so that as we're thinking about it, so that you'll understand that this is God's instruction to us living in a fallen world, giving us some direction on how to do this. And what we will see in this passage is an answer to the question, how does God want us to respond to the vulnerable and the weak among us?

So, let's read the passage together. Starting in chapter 22, verse 21, let's read together. This is God's word.

You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child, if you do mistreat them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn and I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

If you lend to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like the money lender to him and you shall not exact interest from him.

If ever you take your neighbor's cloak and pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering and it is his cloak for his body.

[8 : 56] In what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. You shall not revile God nor curse a ruler of your people.

You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your son shall be given, the firstborn of your son, you shall give to me.

You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. For seven days it shall be with its mother and on the eighth day you shall give it to me. You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore, you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field.

You shall throw it to the dogs. You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil.

Nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit siding with the many so as to pervert justice. Nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him.

[10 : 04] If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it. You shall rescue it with him. You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit.

Keep far from a false charge and do not kill the innocent and righteous for I will not acquit the wicked. And you shall take no bribe for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Let's pray and ask God's help to understand this passage.

Lord, we thank you this morning for your word. Lord, we thank you that it teaches us about you and the character of who you are and Lord, also how you instruct us and teach us and call us to be a people Lord, set apart for you that we might reflect you and display you in this world.

Lord, thank you for the grace that you have shown us in Christ that we might be your people. We pray this morning for your help as we listen to your word. Lord, may you open our hearts to receive your word.

[11:26] Will you awaken our minds to understand it? Lord, will you move our hands to obey it? We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right. So, just one more comment as Greg mentioned last time. You know, this wouldn't have been the section of Scripture I would have picked to preach on this morning.

Like, oh, let's preach on these ones. But because we're committed to preaching through the Scriptures and believing that it has good for us, that all Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for us, so we preach through and we come to this passage and we think, what does this have to say to us?

So, we're going to try to break it down, the process this morning. We're going to first look at the meaning of the passage. The second, we're going to look at its application for us as a church. And third, we're going to look at how it connects us with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, that's basically what we're doing. And as we look at the passage, I don't know if you noticed it, but it has actually a really beautiful structure. It has bookends, it has a center, and then it has everything else.

[12:29] And the bookends, the starting place, is this comment about being a sojourner. This comment about being, he says, you remember that you were a sojourner in Egypt, and therefore, you ought to not oppress or treat badly a sojourner among you.

Now, a sojourner, and this is someone who lived in another land, someone who, in an agricultural context, living in a foreign land, meant that you often had no access to owning your own land or to cultivating it.

It meant you had no place in the society, often legally. Think about Ruth in Israel, or think about Daniel in Babylon. These are people in different parts of scripture who were these, who had moved and settled in a different place, but who were outsiders.

They were resident aliens, might be the technical immigration term that we might use today.

They've moved to live and to reside, but they were not fully citizens.

And so, God reminds them, this is what happened to you. You moved to Egypt, and you lived there for 400 years. And though initially you were welcomed and accommodated and blessed by the Egyptians, over time, it turned sour, and you were oppressed, and you were beaten such that you cried out to the Lord to rescue you from slavery and from oppression.

[14:02] God says to his people, you remember what it's like when those in power took advantage of you. So, you now, as my people, need to remember that I'm a God who rescues people from that kind of situation.

So, you must be one who does not persist in that fallen pattern that our world is so prone to where those in power take advantage of those who don't, but instead, you are to treat them well.

You are to treat them rightly. This is the basic command, and this is the book end of this whole section. And I think it's very instructive because I think what we see is that in all of these different laws, the vulnerable are being exposed for their vulnerability, and the command is to God's people, don't take advantage of the situations where they, in their vulnerability, could be abused or taken advantage of.

And why is this? Well, the bookends lead us to the center. The very center of this passage is actually verse 31. Look with me again at it. And it's kind of an odd verse. I want to just look at the first sentence of it to clarify because the rest of it is a little odd.

But the very center of this is this idea. You shall be consecrated to me. Consecrated is one of those religious words that we use a lot.

[15 : 34] We talk about it a lot. What does it mean? Well, what it really means is to be set apart. It's actually related to the word holy that we read in 1 Peter earlier. It's this idea that rather than something being common every day or sort of mundane, something that is set apart or consecrated is particularly belonging to a sphere of things that have been dedicated to God and set apart for his purposes in the world.

And the connection between the bookends and the center is very clear. God says to his people, I have rescued you from slavery and from oppression and made you my people so that I'm going to set you apart from all the other nations of the world so that you may be the place where I will display what kind of God I am in the world.

And so you are to be distinct and different from the people around you by following my laws and by displaying my character, particularly in this context, by how you treat the vulnerable.

That's the heart of it. Now, in the surrounding verses right around verse 31, you have a couple of things. He says, in this heart, in this, the core of this consecration is that you've got to put me first in your identity and in your lifestyle.

And so, that means you put me first by honoring the authorities that I set over you. First of all, myself, don't revile God and also the governments that are put over you. Don't revile, or the leaders that are put over you.

[17 : 12] Don't revile those because I have put them in place. And then he goes on and he talks about, if you look in verses 29 through 30, this nod towards the idea of the first fruits, the first fruits of our life, the best things, the most important things, the richest parts, go to God.

We give them, we dedicate our firstborn children, we dedicate our first oxen and our first sheep and the first fruit of our harvest. And all of these things as an expression of our consecration, God, we are your people.

This is what he's instructing the nation of Israel to do. In fact, he even gives a nod towards the Passover, it seems, the eighth day.

Seven days, the baby shall stay with its mother, but then on the eighth day, remember circumcision was meant to be done on the eighth day as a sign of setting a human male child apart for God and to be a part of God's covenant community.

And there's a nod even to that idea in the setting apart of the animals on the eighth day rather than on the first. Briefly, I need to say something about the rest of 31, don't I?

[18 : 29] Okay, what's the world about the dogs? So, you know, I'll be honest with you, commentators have some really interesting ideas about this. I think the clearest and easiest understanding of this is that when God calls his people to be set apart, there's a whole sacrificial system that he puts in place and in that sacrificial system, the meaning of life and death and the significance of blood in that life and death picture is so important that he instructs them in other places to not eat meat that still has the blood.

You're supposed to drain the blood from something before you eat it. Now, if you come across an animal that's been killed in the wilderness by dogs, that has not been properly treated, that is, set apart, you have not followed the way that God has honored the significance of life and death in the sacrificial system and pointing ahead to the life and death of Jesus and the shedding of his blood for us.

And therefore, though it might be really tempting to pick up a piece of roadkill and take it home and put it on the barbecue, God says, no, don't do that because that's not, that's not, that's not respecting life and death the way my people are supposed to.

That's my best guess. It's a, you know, 65% read on it so you can argue with me later if you want to. But, so, the bookends are you've been sojourners, God's rescued you.

The center is you've been set apart to be my people and this then flows into all of the other commands, the ethics. And in this section in particular, what God is saying is the way you are to be set apart and distinct is by the way you treat people who are weak and vulnerable.

[20 : 26] Widows and fatherless. Particularly in a patriarchal society. Particularly in an agricultural society where a strong back would have been an important thing.

Widows and children are particularly vulnerable. This is not actually uncommon, this is true throughout human history. and God comes and he says to his people, you must not treat them badly.

You may not mistreat them. Why? Because I will hear their cries. Because I am a God who is a compassionate God. And in fact, I will bring vengeance on you if you treat these the least of them, these the vulnerable, poorly.

I will bring that back upon your head. It's fascinating in the law. It doesn't say the law is going to kick in and bring punishment. God just says if you do this I will come and bring punishment upon you. It's a powerful statement. It says God is reminding them I have a special care so you ought to as well. what did that mean in that culture?

[21 : 48] Well, it might have meant providing food. It might have meant giving them a place to stay. It might have meant giving them a place to work for a child growing up.

It might have meant all sorts of things to care for them. What it did mean is don't take advantage of them. don't take advantage of their desperation to make them your servants or your slaves.

Don't take advantage of their desperation leading to sexual immorality. Don't take advantage of them by making them do your bidding but think about how to treat them well with honor and be a blessing to them.

He then goes on he talks about the poor. He says don't charge them interest because someone who's already struggling to have enough money can't afford to be taken advantage of by having to pay great interest for a loan.

He goes on and he says and if he gives you his cloak as a surety right literally the jacket off his back he's saying the coat off his back I'm giving it to you for a loan seemingly for a day whoever would offer that has nothing else to give right as a down payment or as a as a pledge that he will fulfill paying back the loan.

[23 : 23] God comes and says don't take advantage of that man. Don't let him suffer at the end of the day by keeping his coat but give it back to him so that he will live so that he can wrap himself up in it.

There's a dignity that's being extended towards someone in a vulnerable position. God says this is how you ought to be. He then goes on beginning of chapter 23 he talks about the courtroom and I wrestled with this for a while.

Why the courtroom? Why does he talk about false testimony? Then I thought about it a little bit from the position of those who feel powerless in society who feel like they're on the margins who don't have access to the corridors of power and the influence of those who are well situated and I realized yeah that's exactly right.

The courts are a place where in theory justice is done but in reality when we look at life in a fallen world how easy is it for these systems to actually go wrong?

And this law doesn't condemn the justice system it just says when you're engaging in the justice system when you're engaging in it do it right. Don't fall into the temptation of using the power that you have to take advantage of others.

[24 : 52] In 23.2 it says resist resist the power of peer pressure. Everyone else says he's guilty. Well alright I'll testify he's guilty too.

I don't know anything about it but sure I'll do that. Maybe you remember the case I just came up recently the case of the five or six youths in Central Park who were convicted for attacking a woman jogger.

Twelve years later they were exonerated but in the meantime the justice system put them in jail because they assumed that these teenagers who didn't have an alibi and probably weren't quite doing the right thing but didn't do this wrong thing went to jail.

And people went along with the crowd because there was a lot of peer pressure to get something done. And it took a long time for justice to actually work its way out.

We need to recognize that this can be true. God says recognize the power of peer pressure recognize the power of words. When you speak you must be careful to speak only what is true.

[26 : 11] Do not let your words, your accusations, your insinuations, your testimony be false for the sake of manipulating the justice system for a desired result.

that's what he's saying in this passage. And he goes on and he talks about bribes. Beware the power of money. Recognize how easily money perverts is the word he uses.

Twists the corridors of power in a courtroom. God says my people are to stand for truth and for righteousness.

And they need to be wise to recognize how these power dynamics can be used in a courtroom unrighteously and they need to resist it.

You need to say do not do this. Finally, in verses 4 and 5 of chapter 23, you see God saying and you are to do good to your enemy.

[27 : 17] And recognize, Greg mentioned this last week that there are places in the law where it just says don't do things. But here it's actually a requirement. It is to say when you see your enemy's ox, don't just walk by and say, oh look, there's Bob's car broken down by the side of the road.

Oops. Well, Bob ruined my lawn last year, so I don't care. I'm just going to keep going. He says no, when you see the ox, you have to return it.

And when you see his donkey crushed under its load, you go and you help him so that the donkey can stand and so that the load can be borne.

God says if you're going to be set apart, you're going to love even those who hate you when they are in a vulnerable or a needy position.

This is what it means to be God's people, he says. To be set apart, to be my priests in this world is to not take advantage of those who are vulnerable, to not harden your heart against them, nor to simply stand by and say, it's a fallen world, I know it's really hard, good luck with that, but to actually engage properly and powerfully and meaningfully in blessing and helping fighting against injustice, showing care and compassion and doing what is right even when it's costly.

[28 : 59] Israel would have been a wonderful place to live if these things had actually been true, wouldn't it have? People would have come to the nation because it was a place where they know this is where they would have been treated well.

So this is what God has called his people to, to be set apart. This is the meaning of the passage as we've seen it in its original context of Israel, the nation state that God is creating and leading to establish in the promised land.

This leads us to our second point and our second question, which is, okay, so how do we understand how to apply this today? And we're going to keep saying this so that hopefully it will just soak in, right?

The major thing we want to say is you cannot draw simple straight lines from the Old Testament law to our context today, but we need to think carefully about what God has done.

In the Old Testament, Israel was a nation state, and these were laws governing how that nation state was to inhabit a physical place in a physical government and a physical society.

[30 : 17] Now, what we see in the sweep of history is that with the coming of Christ, God's people moves from this identity of being a nation state to being a transnational, international, multi-ethnic body that does not have a government and does not have a land per se.

but lives in all lands so that people from every tribe and tongue will come and worship Jesus so that the kingdom of God will extend to the ends of the earth.

And because of this, we need to not draw a straight line from the Old Testament laws to, for instance, our governmental laws today.

It does not mean that it doesn't say anything to that. It may say lots of things. It may give us principles and characteristics that are going to be good for our government and for our country. It may reflect ways in which as much as the kingdom of God will come on this earth as it is in heaven, it will be a blessing to our world.

But as we think particularly about this issue of how do we think about God's care, God's people caring for the vulnerable and the weak, think, let's look at a couple of thoughts about how we want to think about that in principle and in practice here at Trinity.

[31 : 44] First of all, Galatians 6.10 says this, so then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

And John 13.35 says, by this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. one of the really interesting things is as you get technically into the definition of sojourner and part of what you see is that the sojourner has actually become a part of the people of Israel. When they've come and dwelt in the land, they've actually said, I will submit to the laws. They might be called proselytes, those who have converted to Judaism. It seems that that's the primary meaning of that word as it's used throughout the Old Testament.

And this points us ahead to what we see in the New Testament, which is that our first application of this principle needs to be in the church. God's people must love the vulnerable and the weak among us in our church, first and foremost.

I'm thankful for this church because I see it. Because I see you loving one another and caring for one another.

[33 : 07] I see you reaching out. I see you sacrificially giving of your time and of your money and of your resources to love one another in many ways.

I see us living out the principle that we would be a church that loves the least of these among us. We must still ask ourselves, is there more for us to do?

Do we really embody this as fully as we might? Is there more for us to grow? How are we doing at caring for the widows among us?

How are we doing coming alongside the single mothers? How many of us are coming out of jail and putting our lives back together?

About some of our elderly. I think of the internationals. Many of you have come and are sojourners in America.

[34 : 16] In this sense. And you are even sojourners in our church. And it feels different. I know what it's like to have been on the other end. To move to another country and to go to church in places where lots of things were unfamiliar.

And I've experienced the church showing a kind of hospitality and a warmth and a welcome. I pray that would be true for us. pastor Greg prayed earlier for the overseas ministry study center.

Our partnership with them is an opportunity for us to love people from all over the world who come to New Haven for a time of rest and refreshment and renewal. And every year we have people from OMSC who are part of our congregation.

I pray and hope that you would look for them. Look to get to know them and to welcome them and to care for them. I think that our tendency in our culture today is less to truly mistreat people as much as it is to just ignore them.

I think it's easier for us to just see the people who are like us who are easy to relate to because of that and to gravitate towards those relationships.

[35 : 42] One of the observations that I make about our church often is that and maybe you can test and see if this is true. Almost everyone I talk to who's been a part of this church for a little while says well this church is for and then they name some group that they're not a part of.

It's for the university. It's for the town. It's for the marriage with children. It's for the university singles. It's for the and it goes on and on and everyone feels like they're an outsider and a minority in this church.

And part of that is because of the blessed diversity that we have that we have all these different people in our church. But let me simply disabuse you of there is no core at least that I understand in this church.

church. All of us need to continue to reach out to one another. To continue to show hospitality. To continue to look for those who are weak and vulnerable and to welcome them and to care for them.

I think however it's a mistake to see that the only application of this is in our church. Because I do believe that there's a very clear call for us to not only do this within our church and first and foremost in our church as Galatians 6 says.

[36 : 58] But also to do good to the world. To be the neighbor. To love our neighbor. Not just in the church but in the world. That this is what God has called his people to do.

So how do we do that? How do we in our culture today think about the vulnerable and the weak? I'm just going to run through, rattle off a list of opportunities that you might think about.

You could get involved in caring for the unborn and unwanted babies by connecting with the Hopeline Pregnancy Resource Center in Connecticut.

You could get involved as some of our, in our congregation have in foster care and adoption to care for children without families that are able to take care of them.

You can get involved in ministries that are working to stop the sex trafficking that's happening in the world. Love 146 is a great organization and it's based here.

[38 : 09] If you don't know more about it, it's a great organization working to be involved in rescuing those who have been enslaved into this terrible, terrible abuse of the week.

If you don't know it, New Haven is a refugee resettlement city. One of the designated ones. There's a ministry here called Iris that helps called, shoot, I forgot it.

International refugee resettlement. Oh, okay. Greg can tell you what it is afterwards. But it's, but they do great work and we've had people in our congregation who've been a part of what they do in helping resettle people from some of the hardest places who are seeking asylum, who are refugees from situations of political or social oppression.

We have an opportunity to welcome sojourners into our city. Not only OMSC, but I don't know if you know this, but every Sunday afternoon there's an Eritrean and Ethiopian congregation that meets in our church downstairs.

An outreach to the immigrant community from that country. If you ever go up on Prospect Street at 10 o'clock on a weekday morning, you will find that if you don't speak Mandarin, you may have a hard time having conversations with people up there.

[39 : 43] Because there's a huge community of overseas Chinese who are here studying. And their grandparents are here taking care of their kids. And we have a partnership with Calvary Baptist Church here in New Haven, a Chinese church.

Reaching out to Chinese speaking. Sojourners in our city. Friends, there are other ways for us to care for those in our city who are in need.

The children, the mentoring program that's run through Bridges of Hope is a great opportunity. And I'm proud of our church for the number of people who have gotten involved. But there's still a need. As you're thinking about your investment for next fall, think about being a mentor and investing in the lives of some of these kids. Think about being involved in the Christian Tabernacle Summer Camp program this summer.

Greg mentioned it earlier. There's a mention in the program about it. You have an opportunity to volunteer and to be a part of that outreach to the Newhallville community through in partnership with Christian Tabernacle Church.

[40 : 53] church. And friends, every Wednesday night there are a small group of people from this church who go to Columbus House to meet, to love, to give dignity to those who are in transition, who are at present without a home.

home. You can be involved in that. There are great opportunities for you to take steps to show God's care for the vulnerable in our city.

May it start here in our household, but may it expand and overflow into our city so that people might know what kind of God we serve.

Now look, none of us can do all of this. Most of us could only do one of these. But that's okay. If each of us said, what will you be involved in? How will you show God's heart?

How will you not allow the fullness and the busyness of your own life that's centered around you to blind you to the opportunities and to the call that God has put on your life?

[42 : 12] To be God's priest in this world. To be holy as God is holy, set apart by his compassion and his love for the vulnerable.

Friends, this is how we ought to think about it in our church and in our culture today. But then how do we connect this with the gospel?

Well, we know this clearly. There's a consistent pattern that God's laws are instructions to us to live a particular way because of what God has done for us.

And friends, what this passage reminds us is that spiritually, fundamentally, we know that we too were sojourners. That is, we were alienated from the kingdom of God and outsiders because of our own sin.

Because of our sin and rebellion and rejection against God, we were aliens and strangers to God and to his kingdom. And God, in his mercy and his grace, sent Jesus Christ.

[43 : 25] And he came and identified with us as an outsider so that he might bring us in. He came and showed compassion to us, not merely judgment and condemnation.

He came to rescue us from the alienation that we experience because of our sin so that we might be his people in the world.

That he might set us apart then to be those who, in our holiness, would not be self-righteous in condemning of others, but would show compassion and mercy.

Romans 5, 6 says this, for while we were still weak, there it is, in our weakness, in our sin, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

And friends, that's every one of us. And so if we find ourselves becoming disgusted or condemning of the weak and the vulnerable, perhaps we need to go back and remember our own sin and the way that God treated us.

[44 : 30] How he sent Jesus to rescue us. How he showed mercy to us. So that we might be a people who would show mercy to this world in Jesus' name.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this word, for the exhortation it is. Lord, we pray that you might help us to hear it and Lord, to respond in obedience to it.

Holy Spirit, I pray you would be even now pricking our consciences and helping us see, Lord, ways in which we have not been full of care for the vulnerable and weak among us.

In our church and in our community. Lord, would you also lead us. Lord, help us to see where the places are that we can take steps of obedience to serve you and to love others in your name.

Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Come on in, kiddos.