

BEGIN THE JOURNEY INTO EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

“Grow Into an Emotionally Healthy Adult”
Luke 10:25-29

THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

7 Pathways

1. Know Yourself that You May Know God
2. Going Back in Order to Go Forward
3. Journey Through the Wall
4. Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss
5. Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath
6. Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult
7. Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life”

Iceberg Model What Lies Beneath the Surface



Different Parts/Components of Who We Are



Two MYTHS:

1. When I accept Christ and he comes to live inside me, growing into an emotionally mature adult is natural.
2. A Christian's ability to love those around them is qualitatively different than those outside the church.

Infant

- feels a need, but can only cry
- must wait for parents to figure it out
- becomes angry if parent is inattentive

Child

- can communicate but still dependent on others
- acts out feelings of pain, fear and resentment
 - Lacks skill to openly discuss and negotiate getting needs met

Adolescent

- rebels against parental authority
 - defines self in reaction to others, fears being treated as "child"
- "don't tell me what to do"

Adult as Emotional Infant

- treats others as "objects to meet my needs"
- acts like tyrant and wins through intimidation
- unable to empathize with others

Adult as Emotional Child

- acts out resentment through distance, pouting, whining, clinging, lying, withholding, appeasing, lying
- does not openly and honestly express needs

Adult as Emotional Adolescent

- cannot give without feeling controlled or resentful
- capacity for mutual concern is missing
- defensive, threatened by criticism

Adult

1. Able to ask for what they need, want, prefer – clearly, directly, honestly, respectfully.
2. Desire for relationships to win.
3. Able to listen with empathy.
4. Willing to risk saying what is needed without attacking.
5. Respects others without having to change them.
6. Able to resolve conflicts maturely and negotiate solutions.
7. Gives themselves and others room to make mistakes and not be perfect .

Two Applications:

1. Become aware of your family of origin's capability for emotional connection.

-Can you recall being comforted as a child after a time of emotional distress?

(Think of a time when one of your parents/caregivers comforted you when you were really upset, scared or sad for some reason.)

1. Did you learn to trust?
2. Did you learn to respect others?
3. Did you learn to wait and to take turns?
4. Did your parents/caregivers understand your behavior?
5. Were your feelings allowed?
6. Were you allowed to be the child?
7. Did you learn independence and dependence?

2. Take practical steps of discipleship to grow into an emotionally mature adult.

Theme: Begin the Journey to Emotionally Healthy Spirituality
“Growing Into an Emotionally Mature Adult”

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

April 11-12, 2015 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37 – *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*

VIDEO EHS Intro Week 7

SLIDE Growing into an Emotionally Healthy Adult

Today we wrap up a sermon series on Emotionally Healthy Spirituality that we began 6 weeks before Easter. The main focus of EHS is that we can't grow spiritually and become all God intend for us to become unless we are striving to be healthy emotionally. Please take out of your bulletin these Message Notes that you have folded in half. They have some resources listed on them you might find helpful as well as some of the major points of the sermon. Please take any notes and write down anything you feel God is speaking to your heart. The Meditation Moments for this series are actually in this little book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Day by Day – A 40 Day Journey with the Daily Office*. We've given you a sheet that tells you which week we are on and which dates go with that week. These books cost \$11 or we will give you one if you can't afford it. I think you will find this to be a huge blessing as part of this journey, to spend time daily with God.

If you have been following along with us you know that we took a small break for Easter but I hope you will continue with the devotional books this week and next and finish them out. I have been through these devotionals a few times now and I get something different out of them each time. I pray you will be blessed by them as well. There is actually one more chapter after the one we finish today and that one is really about your own personal application of these concepts so I hope each of you and your groups will continue with that one more week.

I want to remind you that one of the main understandings of this series is that we want to merge our inner lives with our outer lives. We want to connect our spiritual lives with our outer actions. If we are not careful, we can become people who work on our spiritual lives by reading the Bible, attending worship, giving our gifts, serving with our talents and listening for God in prayer, but we

are emotionally maladjusted and disconnected. We can be people who go to counseling, do good deeds and become a part of 12-step groups but without developing their contemplative side.

GRAPHIC 1 The iceberg — What Lies Beneath

We have been looking at the graphic of the iceberg because it symbolizes who what we see above the surface may change—our behaviors may even change—but what is below the surface does not change because it was not addressed and so we become doomed to repeat the old patterns. We have to address the emotional component underneath—the why we do what we do and not just the “what.”

GRAPHIC 2 Different Components of Who We Are

We have these different components of who we are: Emotional (Heart), Spiritual (Soul), Intellectual (Mind) and Physical (Strength.) We also are tasked to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, which is the Social component of who we are. My core way of loving and emotionally connecting to others is reflected in how my family did or didn't do it. I learn these things and hopefully my family helps me to mature in how I relate to others and how I love them and how I love myself.

We mature by recognizing all of these parts of ourselves and how they are interrelated. We grow from unhealthy spirituality to healthy spirituality, from spirituality marked by pretense and hypocrisy to spirituality marked by realness and authenticity by connecting our insides with our outsides.

Today we want to look at how we practically make this connection and grow into emotionally mature adults as we discover them in biblical principles. First, let's look at some myths we find in our Christian faith.

SLIDE Myth 1 – When I accept Christ and Christ comes to live in me, growing into an emotionally mature adult is natural.

We read 2 Corinthians 5:17 is a passage in which Paul encourages us about what it means to become a follower of Jesus Christ.

SLIDE *17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

The mistake we make is that we think that this change happens automatically, but it doesn't. We have to grow and mature as members of Jesus Christ. The process is not natural but it takes work on our part as well as letting

the Holy Spirit work within us.

SLIDE Myth 2 – Christians ability to love those around them is qualitatively different than those outside the church.

Christians still struggle with divorce, parenting, sexual immorality, greed, conflict, and anger at a very similar rate to non-Christians. Our quality of love (in general) is not that much better – underneath the surface beneath closed doors.

Nobody would debate that being a spiritually mature Christian is about loving well. The problem is that most of us have not learned to practically and effectively apply truths of the Bible to loving others.

As an example, the Bible admonishes us to quick to hear and slow to speak; speak the truth in love; be angry and don't sin. The Bible tells us to love but it does not explain how. WHO KNOWS HOW TO DO THESE 3 THINGS PRACTICALLY? If this is what it means to be Jesus Christ to the world then how do we do this?

Here is a little inventory for you to examine where we are. These things come out in our closest relationships, more so than at work. You will find this list in your message notes for this weekend.

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- ...feels a need, but can only cry
- ...must wait for parents to figure it out
- ...becomes angry if parent is inattentive

SLIDE Adult as Emotional Infant.

- ...treats others as “objects to meet my needs”
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- ...cannot give without feeling controlled or resentful
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SLIDE Adult

- ...able to ask for what they need, want, prefer – clearly, directly, honestly, respectfully
- ...desire for relationships to win
- ...able to listen with empathy
- ...willing to risk saying what is needed without attacking.
- ...respects others without having to change them.
- ...able to resolve conflicts maturely and negotiate solutions.
- ...gives themselves and others room to make mistakes and not be perfect.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is the story of a person who models mature loving. In verse 25 we read about a lawyer, or expert in religious law, or scholar. This is WRITTEN TO US and he represents us CHURCH GOERS. He asks what he must do to inherit eternal life and Jesus tells them that he probably already knows. The man answers that he should love God and follow the commandments and Jesus says he is right as he summarizes all of the law and the prophets in those two great commands to love God with your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as you love yourself. The man then asks a very simple question which leads to this powerful parable. Who is my neighbor?

Let’s hear the story again today from Luke 10: 30-37

- SLIDE *30 Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.***
- 31 “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by.***

32 A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

33 “Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

36 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.” Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

The emphasis on this word “do” is meant to imply that you do it constantly. We are to be one like that Samaritan, doing this, having mercy and living in this way. It is a very active kind of phrase and this is the heart of what Jesus is trying to convey to the man.

GRAPHIC 3 Road from Jerusalem to Jericho

This is a desolate and tough place in climate. We got a chance to see the end of this road which travels 18 miles and descends 3300 feet as you wind your way from Jerusalem, one of the highest places in Israel, down to Jericho which is near the Dead Sea. It is a very narrow and dangerous road with lots of caves and it would be very easy for robbers to come and mug people and steal their belongings.

There is a movement that the Samaritan goes through which we are meant to see in this parable and it is a threefold dynamic of what happens when you get off of a horse. The Samaritan is actually riding a donkey but we are going to call it a horse because more of us are familiar with that. We are going to assume that he is writing on the donkey, although we don’t really know. In ancient days, when they preached on this text in the early church, they talked about the idea of getting off of your horse and I think that makes the most sense for those of us who live here in this community and who may have experience writing horses.

I want you to think about yourself riding a horse. Jesus is teaching in this parable what it means to love well and we love well by getting off of our horse,

not only our literal horse but sometimes our “high horse.” There are three dynamics I want you to take with you today when it comes to this idea of getting off of our horse and learning how to love well.

SLIDE Entering another’s World
Holding Onto Yourself
Hanging between Two Worlds

Let’s repeat those three things together because these are really the key to loving well. Entering another’s world, holding onto yourself and hanging between two worlds are the keys to loving well. We have to do all three of these to love well. We can’t just take one or the other, but we need all three and they mesh together but they are distinctly different. If we are going to love well like Jesus then we have to get these three things and we have to grow into them in mature into them as people of faith who are seeking to be the presence of Jesus Christ the world.

The victim in this story it says and up half dead in his stripped naked. Close had value in that day, much more so than today. They didn’t have thrift stores for us to go to it by use clothing because it was too valuable. The man is beat up and he has been abandoned. It was a gang who did this and left them there to die. The Priest would’ve been upper-class religious establishment and the Levite would’ve worked in the Temple. The Priest and Levite know the Bible. Their whole life is set aside to love and serve God, but they see the man and do nothing. Neither investigates the crisis or help. Maybe they had a lot on their minds. Maybe they were distracted. What is clear is they had disconnected spirituality from loving well. It’s been said:

SLIDE “Busyness is greatest enemy of spirituality”

There were many possible reasons they did not stop. They could have been preoccupied, frightened, felt inadequate or exhausted after 1 month in temple. They have thought, “I’m only one person.” They may have thought, “If I touch this mangled person and they are dead then I will defile myself. I cannot touch a dead body!!” They may have been worried that there were still robbers in the caves and they could’ve ended up half dead on the side of the road. Maybe they were burned out and had a really bad week and they were just tired. Maybe their spouses are waiting for them with dinner at home. Maybe they don’t even care. We don’t really know and Jesus doesn’t go into detail. The point is that they kept going. Let’s assume they were on a donkey or a horse and the idea is that they

never got off their horse.

We are meant to compare these actions with the Samaritan who, “Sees and takes pity.” He has “compassion,” which is a key word used by Jesus. The shock of story is meant to be that this man is a Samaritan had bad doctrine and didn’t practice his faith well! Jews saw Samaritans as second class and not worthy of the Kingdom of God because they had bad theology. Jews and Samaritans hated each other and were in essence 2 races, 2 different religions with 2 political views. Religious people in particular would’ve looked down upon Samaritans because they were seen as inferior. One of the Jewish sayings was that, **“He who eats the bread of Samaritans is like the one who eats the flesh of pigs.”** Devout Jews believe that Samaritans were literally going to hell because they wrecked the Jewish religion.

This is the key phrase of the entire parable because the priest in the Levite had no compassion. Something inside of the Samaritan was different. The word “compassion” is not about a sentiment. The word compassion is a feeling word that means it starts in intestines and proceeds to affect your whole body. The idea is that you have a broken heart or you are sick to your stomach. This feeling comes from the depth of someone’s personality. **“Compassion is so intense and vivid that you feel it in your guts.”**

This Samaritan has compassion and he gets off of his horse. He moves towards the man and enters this person’s world. This is someone who was probably Jewish who was beaten up on the side of the road and so it would have been his enemy. THINK OF PERSON YOU WOULD THINK IS DEFINITELY NOT RIGHT WITH GOD. Jesus says we are to love that person well! Is that a person with a different religion or political views or race? Think of someone who has “bad religion” in your opinion. We are to FEEL compassion for them.

Why would you get off of your horse for anyone? Why does the Samaritan get off of his horse? The big idea in this parable is that the Samaritan recognizes that this person is made in the image of God. The end of Genesis 1 talks about how God made humanity in God’s image as the climax of creation. God said that it was “very good,” which means that it’s spectacular and beautiful. The word is actually meant to bring about the image of art and that humanity reflects God’s creation as a work of art. We are not God but we are made in God’s image. God feels and we feel. God thinks and we think. God acts and we act. God speaks and we are able to speak. God loves and we are able to love. We are of infinite value before God.

King David talks about this in Psalm 8 when he says, ***“Who are we that you are mindful of him? You made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor.”*** There is this picture that we are crowned with glory and honor and we have been crowned a king or queen. We might think we are trash but God says that we are crowned with glory and honor. It doesn't matter what you believe or what your religion is or what you've done, just being made in the image of God means that you and I have been crowned. We look around and recognize that the people sitting around us even our kings and queens, people of infinite value made in the image of God.

You may not like them that God sees people as crowned with glory. The word, “glory,” is about something substantial or heavy. It literally means, “awesome.” It leaves you speechless when you see glory and when you see people we are meant to say, “Wow, glorious, awesome, spectacular!”

This is the beginning of having a proper self image and seeing ourselves as God sees us. This is not about being adopted as a son or a daughter of the living God. If you have a lot of self-hate and shame and self-contempt, this is the beginning of getting healing and recovery from that brokenness, just remembering that you were made by God to be loved by God. That is why it is so horrific when someone is abused physically or emotionally or sexually. When someone has violence done to them it is horrific because of the preciousness and sacredness of people who are made in the image of God.

This is revolutionary because the man on the road is not the same religion or even the same race or the same family or the same political group as the Samaritan but it doesn't matter, because that person laying on the side of the road was made in the image of God and has tremendous value.

When I took psychology classes in college we learned about Martin Buber, the great psychologist and theologian who talked about our human tendency to look at people as an, “it.” We don't always look at people as real people in persons made in the image of God. We are into production and super efficiency in technology and we have goals and we end up seeing people as objects that we need to manipulate in order to get what we want to get done.

The Samaritan sees this man and he gets off of his horse and he sees them not as an object. He sees them as someone made in the image of God and he enters his world. Let me ask you a question. What do we do when we see a person in need? What's the first thing that goes through our minds? Do we

wonder how we can enter into their world by listening or practically caring for someone's need? Example

It's very hard to see people as a "thou" and not an object. Think of your family or the people that you go to school with or the people that you work with. Are they "its" or are they "thou"? Are we just using them because we have stuff to do? Think of your attitudes towards police officers, especially in light of the few incidents that we begin to pick up in the media about police officers who have made mistakes and seen the people they are supposed to be serving as "its." Are they "its" or are they people? How about the people who give tickets? This is a challenge for any of you who work in the sector of serving others. Are the people you serve an "it" or are they people?

Let's just take the people in this room. Are they "its" to you or are they people? Do we just come to church hoping for a blessing for ourselves and then rush out to get on with our day? I read in the newspaper today about the most recent survey of religious life in America which found that fewer people are going to church but more people spend time in prayer on their own. While it's a good thing to be in prayer on your own it doesn't necessarily help you keep from turning people into "its". One of the reasons that the church is such an important part of what it means to be people of faith is that we have to deal with people who can drive us crazy, but nevertheless are made in the image of God. If our life is just about us and we don't enter into anybody's world then we just stay on our horse, which eventually turns into a high horse.

We can even do this in the name of Jesus even though we have just heard the Scriptures teaching us about loving people. We can hear all of that and we still stay on a horse. Are the waiters and waitresses who serve you people or are they "it's"? Do you look at rich people as its? Do you look at poor people as its? Do we look at Native Americans as its? Do we look at Caucasian people as its? Do we look at people in other generations as its? What's really funny is when Christians say to me, "Oh those Christians just drive me crazy!" They're one of them and they are its along with all the Christians! We talk about Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists or people of other faith traditions and make them into its because it's just easier to walk through life on your horse.

I can be preaching to you and speaking to you as your pastor and turn you into and it because it's easier sometimes. I end up using you for my need to have a good sermon. Some of us are teachers or doctors or social workers or we have our own business or counselors and each of us knows that we can go through our

profession and deal with people as its rather easily, especially when we get burned out. At a police officer tell me recently about how someone told them during their training to treat people as its and you can imagine then how all of the people they serve, especially those in jail, then treat their jailers like its. Nobody is getting off their horse and it creates pain and hurt.

But we are meant to be different as followers of Jesus, people who are seeking to be the presence of Christ to the world. "Presence" in our purpose statement is so important because we are meant to be present with each other and see each other and see people in the world. Loving well begins by getting off of our horse and entering into somebody's world. The very first step is to stop seeing people as "its" but to see them as people.

Fred Rogers from Mr. Roger's neighborhood died recently but last year gave the commencement address at Marquette University. Fred Rogers was a United Methodist pastor and when he met people he would often bow to them, signifying that they were made in the image of God and they were kings and queens. He did that to bow to the eternal image of God which was inside of each person. Every morning he would swim at a swim club in Pittsburgh where he was living. There was an attendant who worked at the pool named Jeff who had been there for 25 years. He sorts out the towels and he cleans the sinks and toilets and cares for all of the people who swim at the swim club.

Recently they celebrated Jeff's 25th anniversary of working in the swim club. Mr. Rogers asked Jeff what he should say to the Marquette graduates. Jeff said, "Tell them to be glad for who they are." The greatest gift that Mr. Rogers gave to those around him was to get off of his horse and to really see them and be present with them, just like he did for this young man Jeff who had served them faithfully all of those years.

SLIDE Hold Onto Yourself

The second dynamic that we see in the story of the Good Samaritan and it is crucial for us if we are going to love people well is to hold onto ourselves. The Samaritan does not have all of the talents or gifts needed to help this man. Notice that while he stops on the journey to care for the man he then takes him to the inn but doesn't bring the guy home. The Samaritan actually goes up on his way and continues his journey. He spends his money and pays it forward but he doesn't give the guys credit card. He comes back and pays what is needed and he does enough to save the half dead guy. The little bit that he has he is willing to

give any save the guys life but he also holds onto his life and continues on his journey.

Many of us who have been serving others for so long are good at getting off of our horse but we get burned because we are trying to do too much. We step back and then we don't want to get off of our horse anymore. We are willing to send a postcard or call the ambulance but we are not willing to get off of our horse. This is why the second dynamic of holding onto ourselves is so important. What if the Samaritan had brought the half dead man home to his house and then he stayed for six months and then he began to resent him? His wife divorces him and his kids are distant because they never see him and the Samaritan no longer picks anyone up anymore.

We can't be everything to everyone and if we try to be we become afraid of even getting off of the horse. We sometimes get paralyzed because of this and we forget that God has placed us where we are and it is only in this place that we can get off of our horse. Some of us make a commitment to get off of our horse when we get on that mission trip or when we get to the slums of Calcutta or the poor village in Africa or Guatemala or Honduras. We often want to be somewhere else. If I wasn't in this family then I could love well. If these were my kids or if this wasn't my coworker or if these were my neighbors, then I could really love well. If I was just somewhere else than I could love well so I will wait until the timing and the atmosphere is just right.

The point of this parable is that we are called to love right where we are today. On our way we are meant to see people and let God come alive in us and enter into their world as we hold onto ourselves. Most of us spend our lives looking to be somewhere else with somebody else. The way the world gets change is biased being willing to stop for one person. It's like Jesus pausing to be present for the one. Jesus always seems to start with the heart of someone who has received mercy, whether it is tax collectors or prostitutes or those who are sick. Where you are today is part of who you are and it's the only place where we can truly serve others and hold onto ourselves.

Parable of the starfish from the Nootka Tribe in the Pacific Northwest

As we walk out of the building are willing to be present with who we are in the place that we are with the people who come across our path, even if it's just for 60 seconds? Can we stop multitasking even for a few moments and be present? We get off of our horse and we stop. Just begin with one.

SLIDE Hanging between Two Worlds

After we get off of our horse and enter another's world, hanging onto ourselves, there is another final idea. Loving well comes at a cost. For the Samaritan it cost some time and some money and maybe some reputation depending on who knows that he picked up this enemy off the side of the road. Many of us find ourselves saying that we can't afford to give to the poor or to anyone else. The truth is that if we want to love well we have to recognize that it will come at a cost because it does take sacrifice.

We ask you to give for the Easter offering over and above your regular giving and it is meant to be a sacrifice that cuts into our regular lives so we can put things into perspective. I tell you all the time as your pastor that the reason to give it so that we can grow and we can't grow without giving up and spending some energy and making a sacrifice.

The Priest in the Levite knew the doctrine about loving your neighbor as you love yourself but it was hard and difficult and they didn't do it. Often time as religious people we know the right thing to do but we don't get off of our horse and we just keep going because it takes a sacrifice and it feels impossible. We feel like we don't have the power or the strength to make this thing happen in the truth is that you are right. The only way that this will happen is if we recognize that we can't do it on our own.

Part of what is happening in this parable is that Jesus is trying to break the presumptions of the legal religious person asking the question. You see the great challenge for most of us as religious people is that we help people so that God will save us. We help people so that God won't be mad at me and God will love me and it is basically self-centered. It pays to do good because God will bless me. I want to give so God won't take it out on me and most people are trying to be moral and respectable just in case, so they can be sure to be saved. We are often being good only for ourselves if we are really honest. We're not really doing it for God.

Christianity actually works in the reverse of that line of thinking. We are good to others because God has been good to us. It is only if we experience this grace that we can give it. We cannot give what we don't have. We receive that grace and then it flows out of us, which is why the greatest commandment says to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That will allow us to be a neighbor and it is the only thing will change us. You and I are alive through the free grace alone of

someone who gave us grace.

The story of the good Samaritan we are supposed to recognize that we are that person who is half dead and beat up on the side of the road. We can't help ourselves unless someone rescues us and if that doesn't happen then we are going to die. The gospel is that Jesus is our Good Samaritan. Jesus came by the road and saw us mangled and I didn't even realize how dead I was to the world. Jesus Christ was my neighbor and he saw me bleeding and unable to save myself. If he doesn't intervene that I'm going to die in the gospel is that Jesus comes and he didn't just give me medicine to put on my wounds, but he literally hung between two worlds to build a bridge.

Jesus doesn't just put me on a donkey but saves my life and adopts me into his family. Jesus rescued me and saved me out of the pit and he is my neighbor, my Good Samaritan. Just like the guy in the road deserved nothing from the Samaritan but was given a free gift, so we are given the free gift of grace from Jesus Christ.

Until we see that free gift of grace from others and don't recognize that we ourselves are laying down the road, we will keep walking right on by others. We can never be a true neighbor to people until we recognize that we have a true neighbor who loves us not for what we've done but for who we are. This is a pure gift of mercy that we can't earn or deserve, but we simply receive. We are alive today through the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ. When we were on the side of the road God rescued us and brought us into his kingdom through the grace of Jesus Christ.

We will never get to experience what it feels like to be the Good Samaritan until we understand this. The last parable that Jesus tells is in Matt. 25 where he talks about the sheep and the goats. It seems like a strange parable that shouldn't be in the New Testament because it seems like salvation because of good works. In last day God will tell true Christians from false Christians in this way. "Did you feed hungry, give something to drink to the thirsty, invite the stranger in, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison? If you don't do these things that I won't even know who you are."

Is Jesus saying we're saved by our works? Is it only social workers going to heaven? What about grace and mercy that's free?

Imagine two trees where one tree is full of fruit and blossoms and it's alive. The other tree is dead with no life and no leaves. Jesus is saying that if he lives

inside of us, we will be a live tree. When we go by the road and see a man who is beat up and bleeding we can't help ourselves because our hearts are made into the image of God. We look into the face of that man or woman on the road and we realize that it's us! We can't help but be moved because Jesus is inside of us, filling us with compassion.

The same word used to describe the compassion of the Good Samaritan is the same word used to describe Jesus when he sees a leper or a blind man or a prostitute or the lost multitudes or the prodigal son that the father sees from a distance. Jesus is moved with compassion which wells up inside of them in that same heart is meant to be inside of us and it moves us to get off of our horse and enter into another's world, holding onto who we are and then bridging the gap in between. Even though we don't know all that is going to happen we can't help it and just go on our way and be a religious person, but we have to stop because of the compassion welling up inside of us that we received from Christ as a gift.

We realize that we've been rescued and we got saved even when we had nothing to bring to the table. Jesus grabs hold of us in those broken moments and we have a Good Samaritan in Jesus Christ. Jesus is THE Good Samaritan. When he is in us we can't help but stop and treat people as a "thou" and not as an "it" because I have so much to do.

Paul says in 1 Cor.13, ***"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. IF have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."***

This passage was written to religious people who thought that you had to speak in tongues in order to be a faithful person and Paul is making it clear that it's about loving people well.

God invites us to practice his presence in our daily lives. At the same time, he invites us "to practice the presence of people" by loving them well. Jesus' contemplative prayer life resulted in his ability to be a contemplative presence with people. In the same way, out of our contemplative time with God, we are called to be prayerfully present with people, thereby revealing to them how precious they are to God.

As we close today, I know that some of us are here in the first thing we

need to do is to allow Jesus to be our Good Samaritan. We been trying to fix our life and get it together and make it happen on our own. We are beat up and bloodied and stripped naked on the side of the road. We've been trying to be good, hoping that God would save us. We realize that we are lost and we need a Savior. We need a new life. Jesus invites us to come and bring nothing. We don't have to worry about being moral enough or smart enough because it's irrelevant. We are meant to come and simply receive the gift of grace. The miracle of the Christian faith is that Jesus comes along as our Good Samaritan and he is on the side of the road and picked us up and carries us and we are born into a new family. God says that he will take us where we are right now and we don't have to worry about having the strength.

We can't live this without God living inside of us. We will quit as soon as the going gets tough because we don't want to sacrifice, but when we realize what God has done for us we can't help but want to love others. Some of us walk by others and we don't even feel any compassion. We have so much junk and bitterness and anger and we are so busy that we don't feel anything towards anybody. We are just on our horse and I believe God wants to speak to each of us and recognize that we are all a mess and sometimes we have buried deep down inside of us what God longs to do. We are messed up and we recognize that we relate to the priest and the Levite much more than we do the Samaritan.

Today I want to suggest to you that God is not looking for any of us to be religious but instead to be authentic, real and honest in our brokenness. We will just give ourselves to God where we are today and allow God speak to us our business, we can be changed. As we close in prayer I invite you to come forward and allow God to set you free.

I don't believe God cares if we are the biggest church in town or if we have the best social programs and ministries. I believe God does care about whether we are being Jesus Christ the world and we are loving people well. I believe God does want us to get off of our horse and see people and hang on to who we are and then to build a bridge between two worlds. This community will be changed one person at a time as we see people at work, in our neighborhood, at the store and at school. We are meant to be present with people and love them well. We are not to be caught up in the rat race so our hearts shut down. We let Jesus love through us.

Let me confess to you today that it is very easy to be a Senior Pastor and not love well. It's very easy to be in any helping profession and not love well. As

we leave today I hope that each one of us would simply ask to whom we can be a neighbor. Can we recognize that we have been rescued from the pit?

SLIDE Prayer

God, this parable can be crushing because we can feel like we are not a Good Samaritan. Jesus gives us the gift of being a Good Samaritan. He walked upon this earth to literally hang between two worlds. Our salvation is pure mercy so Lord have mercy on us. God help us to mature as people of faith into those who are willing to get off of our horse, hold onto ourselves and then be a bridge between two worlds. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. I know there is something put in each of us by the Holy Spirit which is alive and that longs to push us off of our horse and move into the lives of others. Change us and move through us, doing something in us we can't do on our own. By the Holy Spirit, break the chains of our past and our hurt and help us to receive from you the gift of grace and mercy. Remove the bitterness and the anger and the assumptions we had about others. Create in us clean hearts and deliver us from being religious. Help us to be the presence of Jesus Christ into the world and transform us from the inside out. May others see in us the willingness to be present and know that we don't want to use people or manipulate them. Help us to treat others as a "thou" instead of an "it." Assure us that we are made in your image and we are valuable and sacred and holy before you, which then will allow us to see others in the same way. No matter what people believe or where they are at, help us to see each person as you see them because you rescued us from the side of the road. I pray you would do this deep work in each of us God. We pray this in his holy name. Amen