



BEING JESUS CHRIST TO THE WORLD



Under the authority of Christ, we are bearing a community of Jesus followers for the transformation of the world

“Cars”

Theme: FUMC Goes to the Movies

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-11

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon

Family/Community Activity for the week: People are created for life together. While it’s important to have times of quiet & solitude, God calls us to live out our faith in relationship. Sometimes, though, we find ourselves so caught up in our own rhythms, commitments, responsibilities, goals, & pastimes, that we fail to notice the people around us. Jesus said the most important thing we can do in addition to loving God with all our heart, soul, mind & strength, is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). When you come together, share what each of you know about your neighbors. Who are the people who live on your street or within a couple of blocks? How many have you met? Do you know their names? When was the last time you spoke to any of them? Do you know if they are living alone or are lonely? Decide to introduce yourself to a neighbor you haven’t met, or visit a neighbor you haven’t seen in a while. Bake cookies together to take with you, or take a bowl of fresh fruit to share. Ask questions, so as to learn about your neighbor; how they are doing, if there’s anything they need that you might be able to assist with. Commit to praying for your neighbor for a week, giving thanks for the opportunity to meet someone new, even or especially if it was uncomfortable. Remember & give thanks for those people who have been good neighbors to you.

Meditation Moments for Monday, July 24 - Read Pro. 12:15, Pro. 13:10, Pro. 19:20, and Pro. 3:11-12. In the movie “Cars” The King, a veteran racecar near retirement, offers Lightning McQueen some words of wisdom telling Lightning that he has a lot of talent, but

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that he is foolish. He says, “This ain’t a one-man deal, kid. You need to wise up, get yourself a good crew chief and a good team. You ain’t gonna win unless you got good folks behind you and you let them do their job like they should.”

- Lightning isn’t able to actually hear & follow the good words of counsel The King gives him, even though The King has a distinguished racing career & extensive experience that would benefit Lightning as he is just beginning his career. How do you react when someone tries to give you wise counsel? Can you remember a time someone shared some words of wisdom? Were their words helpful? Why? Did you change your behaviors, so as to adopt their counsel? What was the result?

- What about discipline—do you accept discipline as an act of love, as the writer of Proverbs 3 tells us it is? Why do you think that is? When is the last time you were disciplined? What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Was the correction an appropriate one? What might you do to see discipline as a welcome act of love?

Prayer: God of Wisdom & Love, it is hard to be corrected. Sometimes I feel it is warranted, & sometimes I don’t. At times I can be honest about my shortcomings, & sometimes I’m mostly good at justifying my behavior. Change my heart, Lord Jesus, that I may hear your correction & guidance with humility & respond with trust. Amen.

Tuesday, July 25 - Read Romans 12:3-8 & 1 Cor. 13:1-13. Paul warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. This can happen in subtle ways, or blatantly at times. Lightning was sponsored by Rust-eze, maker of a “medicated bumper ointment.” The brothers who own Rust-eze saw potential in the young rookie, so gave Lightning a chance at racing as a career. Lightning, however, wants to win the Piston Cup, so he can be the “new face of Dinoco” the oil giant that sponsors “The King.” When Lightning is obliged to make an appearance after a race at the Rust-eze tent, he says to his only friend, Mack, “I hate rusty cars. This is not good for my image.”

- Why do you think we tend to categorize people? What is it that makes one person better than another in our minds? Why do we get uncomfortable around people who don’t look like us or look the way we think they should? How do you think God categorizes people?

- Is thinking too highly of yourself something you’ve struggled with? As you go through today, silently thank God for every person you see, acknowledging they were created by God in God’s own image, & are all worth dying for in his eyes.

Prayer: Holy God, you call me to be holy—set apart for your purposes & reflecting the light of your love—not the self-referenced ways of the world. Sometimes I think poorly of others or more highly of myself than is warranted. Wash me clean, & help me assign an eternal value to every person I see. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Wednesday, July 26 - Read Proverbs 17:28, Luke 6:29-35 & Ephesians 4:29. After being sentenced to repair the road he destroyed in Radiator Springs, Lightning says of the residents, “Folks around here aren’t firing on all cylinders,” as well as, “I’m in Hillbilly Hell, my IQ’s dropping by the minute—I’m becoming one of them!” With the advent of social media, we have more avenues to say what we think than ever before, plus the freedom of saying it from behind a computer screen or smart phone, instead of face-to-face. Some people practice respect & common courtesy, while some readily share any vile thought they have, demean anyone with views differing from their own, & pronounce judgment on people & situations.

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- Have you been personally attacked for your point of view? How did that feel? What was your response? Do you have safe places to share ideas & thoughts with those who think & understand differently than you? Is it possible to maintain close relationships with others who see things very differently than you?

- When was the last time you spoke words you regretted? What could you have done differently to offer up words that would have built up the community & benefitted those who heard? If you have a pattern of harsh speech, what is one small change you can make today, so “no corrupt word” will proceed from your mouth?

Prayer: *God of grace, sometimes my thoughts & words don't reflect your love. Work in me by your Holy Spirit, so I may speak words that encourage & bless those who hear. May the words of my mouth & the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength & my Redeemer. Amen.*

Thursday, July 27 - Read Romans 5:1-5. Lightning faces what might be his first encounter with suffering while working to repair the road he destroyed. In the process he learned to keep pushing through, which began to shape his character & give him hope in new ways.

- Name a time you faced a great trial or deep suffering. Did that experience produce endurance in you? Did endurance give way to character, or character give way to hope? Why or why not?

- What about this season—is there a particular hope that is guiding you through a trial or difficulty of some kind? How would you articulate that hope? What does it look like? How can you practice or nurture your hope, so as to keep your eyes on Christ Jesus instead of your trial?

Prayer: *Jesus, Lord & Savior, you were despised & rejected by others; a man of suffering & acquainted with grief. Meet me in my suffering, that I might rise with you to newness of life, having been transformed into one who endures, one whose character is shaped by the Refiner's fire, & filled with the hope of glory. In Christ Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

Friday, July 28 - Read Luke 14:7-11, Proverbs 11:2. Lightning was consumed with other people's opinions of him, made himself out to be more than he was, & thought people ought to be impressed with him. Spending the week in Radiator Springs opened his eyes to simplicity, friendship, kindness & compassion. In short, he learned humility. Saint Augustine was credited with saying, “It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.”

- Pride can show itself in many different ways: fault-finding in others, harshness, intolerance, insecurity, defensiveness, perfectionism, self-importance, being unteachable, lacking compassion, placing blame or being arrogant. How does pride manifest itself in your life? Why do you think this is?

- If fear is the root of pride, what fears do you have that might be going unacknowledged? Can you lift up those fears to God today in faith? Ask God to protect you from a “spirit of fear” (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

- **Prayer:** *Holy One, you do nothing that isn't done out of love. All you've ever done & will ever do is out of perfect love for your children. I want to live like that—not caught up in my own stuff, but earnestly caring for others. Jesus, may your kingdom come in me today. Amen.*

Saturday, July 29 - Read Mark 12:28-34, 1 Cor. 13:1-13. Christian musician Stephen Curtis Chapman sings, “Love, love, love, love, love. It's all about love, love, love, love, love.

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Everything else comes down to this - nothing any higher on the list than love! It's all about love" (Steven Curtis Chapman, Capital Christian Music Group). But what does that mean? The Apostle Paul helps us out in 1 Cor. 13.

- Which of the following is an area you tend to do well: practicing patience, being kind, being content with what you have, allowing others to make choices, being happy for others good fortune? Which of the following is an area that could use some work: being impatient, being envious, being unkind, practicing one-upmanship, or keeping track of the wrongs of others?

- Motive matters. Paul says love is our single best motive for all we do. When you interact with others what's your motive? Are you seeking to meet your own needs, or are you thinking about the needs of others? How do you think, speak & act in love? At home? At work? With family? With friends? With strangers?

Prayer: *God of Love, I want my life to be characterized as loving—and not some kind of mushy, superficial kind of love. I want to love like Jesus did—sacrificially & selflessly. His was a sacrificial love that changed things, indeed, it was life-giving. Let me love at all times in that way. I pray in his name, amen.*

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:1-11 (NRSV)

Today we continue our journey considering the ways that the truths of scripture get played out on the Big Screen. I would invite you to take out your bulletin insert. There is a space to write down any thoughts that strike you & which you want to remember or revisit. You will also find scripture readings & meditation moments for the coming week, along with a community or family activity. Today the movie of choice is Disney & Pixar's animated flick, "Cars."

► IMAGE OF THE CARS GANG

In a world populated by anthropomorphic vehicles, the last race of the Piston Cup championship ends in a three-way tie between retiring veteran Strip "The King" Weathers, infamous runner-up Chick Hicks & rookie Lightning McQueen. The tiebreaker race is slated for one week later at the Los Angeles International Speedway in California. Lightning is desperate to win the race, since he would be the first rookie to win a championship, but also because it allowed him to leave the less-than-glamorous sponsorship of Rust-eze (maker of the best medicated rear bumper ointment on the market) & allow him to take The King's place as the sponsored car of the lucrative Dinoco team.

Eager to start practice in California, Lightning pushes his big rig, Mack, to travel all night long. While McQueen sleeps, the exhausted Mack drifts off & is startled by a gang of reckless street racers, causing McQueen to fall out the back of the trailer & onto the road. He wakes in the middle of traffic & speeds off the highway to find Mack, only to end up in the run-down desert town of Radiator Springs, while inadvertently destroying their main road.

After being arrested & impounded overnight, McQueen is sentenced to community service repaving the road. He makes a shoddy first attempt, & is forced to repave it again, which would take several days jeopardizing his chances of getting to California on time. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cars_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cars_(film))

This 2006 hit came to be a favorite while we were living in Wilmore, KY & I was attending seminary at Asbury. While there, I had the great privilege of taking two classes from New Testament scholar M. Robert Mulholland, one of which was the exegesis of Paul's letter to *(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for July 22-23, 2017)* For more, go to www.fumcdurango.org

the Philippians. It was an exercise in the study of scripture the likes of which I'd never had. Philippians had been a favored book before seminary, but it soared to new heights over the course of that class. In addition to the remarkable illumination on the person & nature of Christ Jesus, it also contains what is for me one of the most difficult challenges of the faith.

As I thought about Lightning McQueen, his need to impress others, his pursuit of being the first rookie Piston Cup champ, & the drive to land the biggest sponsor & the most extravagant lifestyle, many scriptures came to mind. But one really stood out—the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. This was one of the little churches he'd launched on his second missionary journey, & they were experiencing deep distress due to ongoing harassment. This was a small band of believers that started with just a couple of people. We know this from the account of Paul's initial stay there. He began his efforts at spreading the Gospel by the river. There was no synagogue, or he would have done that. If a town had as many as 10 Jewish men, they started a synagogue. But there wasn't a synagogue, which tells us there was no Jewish base of people to reach out to first as was Paul's custom. This little congregation was struggling, & as it is in times of tension & stress, it isn't unusual for people & relationships to fall apart. If you want to follow along, Phil. 2 can be found on page ____.

At the end of chapter 1, Paul tells the Philippians to “let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ... standing fast in one spirit... striving together for the faith...” even when it means suffering. But he wants to give them a crystal clear picture of what that looks like.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE, Phil. 2:1-2a NRSV

¹ If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion & sympathy, ² make my joy complete

We pick up at chapter 2, verse 1. Paul says, “¹ *If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion & sympathy, ² make my joy complete.*” Paul presumes the Philippians are in fact experiencing a reality marked by encouragement in Christ, consolation from love, sharing in the Spirit, compassion & sympathy. Paul knows they've experienced this reality—he's been there before & seen it firsthand.

SLIDE - SCRIPTURE

(add the rest of verse 2): *be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind*

But he's making a point. (If you've known these things, & I know you have), then by all means “*be of the same mind.*” The Greek translated into the phrase “be of the same mind” means more than just agreement. It is to have a particular orientation or purpose—truly our very essence. When this happens, Paul continues, it will mean “*having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.*” Before he says more on what that looks like, though, Paul spelled out what it didn't look like.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE

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Verse 3: ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

Verse 3 reads, “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.*”

Lightning McQueen was operating out of serious selfish ambition & unbridled conceit. Thinking about the needs of others would necessarily mean thinking of others in the first place, & he just wasn't in the habit. Lightning had fired three consecutive pit crew chiefs & spoke in a degrading fashion to nearly everyone. People are disposable to Lightning & only good for what they can do for him. In the moments following the race that wound up in a tie, Lightning is interviewed by a sportscaster. Let's take a look...

► **[Movie Clip: One Man Show]**

A one-man show! Pretty severe arrogance here. In the first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks again to this self-referenced perspective when he teaches on the nature of the body of Christ.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE 1, Cor. 12

God arranged the members in the body... as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? ... there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable

He writes, “¹⁸ *God arranged the members in the body... as he chose.* ¹⁹ *If all were a single member, where would the body be?* ²⁰ *... there are many members, yet one body.* ²¹ *The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”* ²² *On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.*”

A few moments after that interview, the veteran, Strip “The King” Weathers, visits the rookie McQueen while they await the announcement of who won. Let's watch their exchange.

► **[Movie Clip: The King speaks wisdom to Lightning]**

Lightning can't even pay attention to a veteran winner for 2 minutes, as he offers words of wisdom. Proverbs 12:15 says, “*Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice.*” Proverbs 19:20 says, “*Listen to advice & accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future.*” Have you ever struggled with this? I've struggled with it. I come from a long line of brilliant people! And, I've done what was right in my own eyes. Depending on the situation, there are still times it's hard to receive counsel or instruction.

I was much like Lightning. At a certain point in my life, I wanted to believe I didn't need anybody. Some people I'd trusted along the way proved to be untrustworthy, & in my mind I determined never to be hurt so deeply again. I couldn't trust anyone. Not only couldn't I receive wise counsel—I didn't want it. I was sure I could forge my own way in life—I was hard-headed & proud. What I wasn't aware of was all that lay underneath that pride. I bore deep-seeded

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shame & embarrassment over the failed relationships I'd had & poor choices I'd made. The result was a very guarded young woman. Pain routinely masks itself as pride.

While we don't get any of Lightning's backstory, we do know he thought he had it all together & didn't need anybody to get where he was going. While he was working to repair the road in Radiator Springs, he ran out of asphalt, so went out to a dirt track to goof off awhile. Let's see what happens.

► [Movie Clip: Doc Tries to Instruct]

Doc was the town magistrate. He is the one who sentenced Lightning to community service fixing the road. He honestly tries to give the rookie some insight. However, once again Lightning is given instruction he doesn't think he needs. Because he simply cannot assign a high value to any other person that isn't just like him, so he misses out on the wisdom.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE, Romans 12:3-5

Because of the grace God gave me, I can say to each of you: don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you. We have many parts in one body, but the parts don't all have the same function. In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other.

In his letter to the Roman church Paul speaks very plainly once again saying, “³ *Because of the grace God gave me, I can say to each of you: don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you.* ⁴ *We have many parts in one body, but the parts don't all have the same function.* ⁵ *In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other.*” (Rom. 12:3-5 CEB). Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought... the parts don't all have the same function... we belong to each other. All this points to the fact that we are simply better together. God created us to live in community, enjoying the fullness of the gifts of every person.

Now let's return to the Philippian text. We thought Paul had meddled enough by telling us to think of others as better than ourselves, but now we'll find he's not done pushing our buttons.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE Verse 4

Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others

He says “⁴ *Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*” Really? How can I be self-absorbed if I'm looking out for others?

Little sidebar here. The translation we're using this morning (NRSV) accurately represents what was written in the earliest manuscripts found of this letter. Along the way,

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however, there was a scribe just minding his own business, copying this letter, doing his job... & got to thinking about what he was writing. “Look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others....” That’s pretty extreme, he thought... Paul probably didn’t mean that—he must have forgotten a word. I’ll just make one little edit.... I know just the perfect 4-letter word: Only! Seems harmless enough, right? Only? [SLIDE WITH 2 SENTENCES]

•Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

•Let each of you look not *only* to your own interests, but also to the interests of others

Many translations read, “Let each of you look not *only* to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” That little word addition makes room for me to keep my eye on me, while I also attempt to tend to the interests of others. That reflects a divided interest, which was not at all what Paul had in mind. We are to be of one mind—to have the same inner orientation—just one. Apparently this is not an orientation where I can vacillate between an orientation to Christ & an orientation to myself—it is singular & undivided.

Now that the Philippians are understanding the idea of being of one mind, he goes on in verse 5 to say that singular orientation believers are to have is nothing less than that which is in Christ Jesus. Verses 6-8 spell that out.

SLIDE – SCRIPTURE, Verses 5-8

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father

“⁶ though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. A believer’s orientation & mindset is humble, sacrificial servanthood. As Christ died for us, so too are we to die to ourselves.

Regarding myself humbly, considering others more favorably than myself, dying to my own wants & needs... This way of life is no small thing. I’ve struggled with it. Some of you may know that before I entered vocational ministry, I was a banker. I worked for banks before & during college. After graduating from Ft. Lewis I went to work for Burns National Bank here in Durango in the bookkeeping department. I was the NSF clerk, tended to the overdraft accounts, & balanced the bank’s correspondent accounts & general ledger. I was a good worker, & routinely finished my work long before day’s end. Because I enjoyed work & liked to be busy, I would help coworkers with unfinished tasks, or tackle projects that cropped up occasionally.

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When the bank offered an incentive program for coming up with money savings or income generating ideas, I found several ways of saving & earning the bank income. I also took on the long neglected work of collections when time permitted. I knew the various positions, got along well with my department cronies, & dreamt of a promotion. Along the way, however, I'd determined what I really wanted was to move to the loan department, where I thought the opportunities for advancement were greater. I put in for positions that opened up on occasion, but wasn't chosen. I began to grow discouraged & got bored with my work.

One year, the time came around for my annual review. I'd enjoyed positive reviews before, so wasn't really nervous. What was unusual, was that bookkeeping had no supervisor. Our boss had made an unexpected move out of state when her husband got transferred, & no one had been moved into that position. The operations officer, Anne Gracey, was covering some of those duties & would check in to make sure things kept running smoothly.

When we sat down for my review, Anne began with affirmations: "Laura, you are one of the hardest workers we have. You routinely finish your work early & help your coworkers get things done. You've learned different jobs on various desks & help to cover many areas in bookkeeping. Your income-producing ideas have generated more fee income than the deposit side of the bank has ever anticipated earning, & we all know when something needs to get done, we can count on you. That said; until you learn to master some interpersonal skills, we can't even begin to consider promoting you." I sat still & just tried to keep breathing.

She continued, "Any time there's a teller difference or new accounts error & you call to tell them what it is, those employees cringe. They jump & scatter as swiftly as possible away from the phone, like water dances to get off of hot grease. While you might simply be telling them the facts of the situation & how to correct it, there is a certain manner in which you go about it, that makes people dread seeing your name appear on the display screen on the phone. You have the knowledge & capacity to be a supervisor, but unless you can learn to relate to others without them feeling like complete idiots, we can't risk moving you out of the position you're in." Ouch.

In years past, I mostly got defensive if someone tried to correct me or give instruction—the result of deep woundedness that hadn't been sufficiently addressed, or exposed to the light of Christ. But God was doing a new thing. My interest in the things of the church had taken a decided turn, & I had just a few months before begun a journey into deliberate discipleship. As I sat in Anne's office my heart began to swell as I realized I'd been unkind & self-righteous. I knew she spoke truth & I wondered how many people I'd hurt over the years.

Lightning's perspective also took a decided turn. During his week repairing the road, he came to know the residents, & learned Radiator Springs had been a popular stop along the old Route 66. When the construction of Interstate 40 bypassed it, the town vanished from the map. Lightning also discovered that Doc was really the "Fabulous Hudson Hornet", a three-time Piston Cup winner, whose career ended after an accident in 1954. Lightning finished the road, which inspired the cars to improve their town, patronized every business in town & reluctantly left with the media to get to California in time for the big race. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cars_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cars_(film))

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Interestingly, Lightning's focus on racing wasn't the same as it had been before. He's distracted & struggled to stay in the race. Let's take a look at what happens.

► [Movie Clip: Doc as Crew Chief]

Image of Doc Hudson as Crew Chief

In humility regard others as better than yourselves... look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Seems Doc figured out what that looked like in real time—they all did. Lightning's new friends all determined his interest was their own. They were better together.

So how do we do that? How do we set aside our own needs, & determine that other's needs are more important? How do we place an eternal value on every person we meet, acknowledging that they are made in the image of God just like us, & have gifts that we need? Well, we look to Christ & follow his lead. Jesus was entirely focused on living out his life for the benefit of others. It shaped everything he did. He knew his needs would be met—that's what happens when we live in the community of Christ. As we take our eyes off ourselves, everyone gets the care & support they need.

When we are in a race unto ourselves, nobody wins. But if we are all freely giving ourselves away for the benefit of the body of Christ, everybody wins. This is kingdom living. And this is what it means to be the body of Christ.