

Growing as An Empathetic Church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 November 2023

Preacher: Christopher Anderson

[0 : 00] My name, for those of you who have not met me, is Tover Anderson. I am a member of Table Church, been a member since 2020. I am a queer person of faith who uses he, they pronouns, a former resident of the Washington, D.C. area whose family still resides here.

And I am ordained to the role of chaplaincy and am the ER and ICU chaplain at St. Joseph's Ascension Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And man, is it good to be home.

What's going on, y'all? It is so good to see you all this evening. And just before we go any further, I had like five ways I was going to intro this after that whole piece, and then just listening to the giving section that we just talked through.

And just what a beautiful example of how a church can come together even tonight just between our prayer team and our music team, the First Impressions team that's set up out front.

And I just want to give you guys kudos. Kudos for even coming out tonight. It is cold and wet and rainy. So just know that you are seen and loved while you're here.

[1 : 05] A lot of my sermons tend to come from my personal life and from my tales of the ER. Now that I get to actually use that as like a life spin thing. Tonight, I don't have any like trigger warnings per se, but just know at any time this is a safe space.

You feel free to bathroom through that way. There are snacks in the back. And probably when I start getting into scriptural theology in the next five minutes, snacks are in the back. You can come back in about five minutes. So tonight we're just going to go right into it.

We're going to be looking at 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses... That's on me. It's fine. Apologize.

Verses 3 through 10. So a little overview of tonight. So just by way of, if you haven't read any of the letter of 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy is a letter written from a church leader to his young protege, in which he's giving him guidance on how to handle complicated social and spiritual situations, particular to that protege's community.

The author shows his protege and us that the life of a Christian in community, it comes back to releasing ourselves from fear and greed from that thing we call mammon, and instead is called to a life of beatitude.

[2 : 26] Beatitude living releases us from fear and greed, and instead gives us peace that comes from trusting in God's goodness. This is not only a personal call for each one of us, but a call for the table church as community.

So tonight, that's what we're going to be looking at. Now, a little bit of an overview, and then what does it mean for us as table church to move away from the love of the love of money, or mammon, and then instead moving into a life of gratefulness and beatitude.

So, the first epistle of Timothy, or 1 Timothy for short, is one of three letters in the New Testament that are often grouped together and are called by theologians the pastoral epistles.

The word pastoral meaning to pastor someone. In this case, it's being really literal. It's letters that literally talk from one person or another about how to handle church stuff.

And it's grouped together with two others. That would be 2 Timothy. Yes, they're related. And Titus. And dang, I had a slide for this that I just remembered I didn't put in.

[3 : 31] I was going to put two Tims, Tim Cook and then Tim Allen, and then I was going to put Titus from, oh, what was that show?

When were they? Anyways, it was very set up, and I just realized it's definitely not up there. Next time, we'll get there. So, this letter is attributed traditionally to St. Paul, and it mainly consists of counsels to a younger colleague that has been sent to the Church of Ephesus in order to help them. Most scholars say that the pastoral epistles probably were written after Paul died, record scratch. If you see a problem there, it's okay.

We'll get there in a second. And they suggest that they were probably written around 150 AD. Why do I tell you this? Because at that time, this was a pretty common thing.

The way I describe it is ghostwriting for a president of the United States. If it's really cool to write a president of the United States story as an author, and you're going to get really good praise, how much cooler it is to be like, I'm writing like Barack Obama, about Barack Obama.

[4 : 43] So, they're kind of the same thing. The writer is using Paul because Paul has a lot of clout behind his name as the 13th apostle. And then for anyone who's a super nerd, this is the, do we have the slide before this one with the big shredded thing?

So, for the super nerds in the room, that is the earliest document of 1st Tim that we have, and it's about, it's from, it's about 1,700 years old. And now we can actually go to the scripture.

So, tonight's scripture, 1st Tim 6, 3 through 10. It says, if you have, and for tonight, unless I mention it, we're going to use the message translation.

The reason being, it just really works for us at table, and especially for this. The guy, the Paul, who I will call Paul the rest of the night, when you read it directly translated, he uses a lot of extra words that just kind of got in the way.

So, in the message translation, it reads as, if you have leaders who teach otherwise, teach otherwise than Jesus, those who refuse the solid words of our master Jesus and this godly instruction, tag them for what they are.

[5 : 59] Ignorant windbags who infect the air with germs of envy, controversy, bad-mouthing, and suspected rumors. Eventually, there's an epidemic of backstabbing, and the truth is but a distant memory.

They think religion is a way to make a fast buck. An avout life does bring wealth, but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God.

Since we entered the world penniless, and we'll leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough. But if it's only money these leaders are after, they'll self-destruct in no time.

Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

So, just a quick breakdown of what we've just read there. Verses 3 through 5, which is the, if you have leaders, and ends with, make a fast buck. The writer is focusing on those who are leading this church in Ephesus.

[7 : 04] So, this church has had a hostile takeover. And these folks that have come in before this letter is written, and the reason that Timothy is sent there is because they have gotten word back to Paul that the folks leading this church have brought in some really, like, wonky teachings.

And he's trying to help Timothy to kind of course correct a lot of these things. And this is a really good set for all of us here at Table to ask questions like, do we come to church on Sunday as a cult of personality?

Do we feel like we're living double lives sometimes? I like the words here in the message. They think religion is a way to make a fast buck. That was hilarious to read as a guy who's a chaplain at a hospital, because my life is literally now based on religion.

And it's a good point for each of us, I think, to ask. Do I come down Sunday because I like the music? Which isn't a bad thing per se, but it's something to know. Or do I go and join a group because I want to be seen doing service more than actually doing the service itself?

Again, just something to know. Each of us comes with a need, so that's okay. But I like what Pope Francis reflected on in 2013. He gave an article, a reflection from, called A Big Heart Open to God, to America Magazine.

[8 : 23] And he says this. The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful. It needs nearness, proximity.

I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It's useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol or about the levels of his blood sugars.

You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds. Heal the wounds. And you have to starve from the ground up. So the question becomes, when we as a church sometimes forget that we're meant to be wounded healers, and I'm using that phrase on purpose, to one another, we can make church something that it isn't.

It isn't about how good the music is, although I will say we are spoiled here. Or the preaching. Thank heavens, says me. Or how hip the preacher's clothes are.

Again, says me, thank God. But three to five reminds us as such. Reminds us that it's about something more. The great 20th century preacher and writer, Henry Nowen, tells us during one of his exemplar books on ministry, called *The Wounded Healer*, hence why I picked that language earlier, The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who's never been there.

[9 : 56] And this is really important. And it's an important distinction that I want to make. I'm not saying that us as a church cannot be happy. That we can't have good lighting and upbeat music, and those who can lead from the front, because God's graced them with all this talent, shouldn't.

But, in fact, I think all of that can be a witness and a testament to who God is and what they've done for us. But it's more of a question, who is all of this for, when we gather on a Sunday night or a Sunday morning?

So my triplet brother, so there are three of us, Stephen, Julie, and myself, him and his wife live in Anacostia. I'm back for Thanksgiving. We're in my family, known as Anderson Palooza 2023, because Thanksgiving for us is the Super Bowl.

Where most of us, I would imagine Christmas is a huge holiday. For us, it is Thanksgiving and wrapped around this tradition that started with my mom. My mom was, should have been a professional baker and literally had been hired as one.

She worked in a cookie company, and they were sending her to work in their test kitchen in Philadelphia. And then she found out she was pregnant with triplets, like three days later. And so she kind of lived as a professional baker for three kids her whole life.

[11 : 14] And Steve has the bug. He has great talent, which he didn't think he was very talented for a while. And then one day, my mom was like, you know you bake as good as I do. Well, now Thanksgiving is his time to show off.

We gather like 20 people a year in his house, and we just go to town. For instance, he started making the crust for pies last Wednesday, like nine days ago.

Him and my niece were literally sent us a picture of the two of them just sitting in the kitchen, just getting ready at like seven in the morning before school. And the funny part is like, throughout the years, he's taken my mom's recipes, and he's made them better.

He's become this like tour de force. He like, he's the guy that for Christmas will be like, can you give me a dehydrator? And I'll go, I'm not even gonna ask you why. Sure, just send it to me on Amazon. I'll send it for you.

Like, because this is his niche. This is his thing. And yet, the thing that he loves the most is sharing it with people. Like, you don't go home from Anderson Palooza without at least a pound of food in a bag full of like reusable, you know those, if anybody's seen *The Bear*, those reusable plastic soup containers that you sometimes get from like takeout places.

[12 : 29] So you go home with like at least five of those full. Each one of us do. Unfortunately, because I'm now on an airplane tomorrow morning, I'm not, but it's okay. I'll just have to come back.

But the thing is, and it was funny watching him on Thursday, the best part of the day was turning around and seeing him standing there with like a glass of scotch, just quietly watching all of us interact, eating.

And he's just kind of standing there as like a proud papa, because he's doing exactly what God has asked him to do. So, in that vein, with that example, we hold on to that question for just a moment. Who is all of this for? Particularly, church, on a Sunday night. We'll come back to it shortly. And that question leads us in the next two verses, six through eight.

And I love the language here in six through eight. A devout life does bring wealth. As I was practicing for preaching this, I kept reading it as does not, and then had to like stop.

[13 : 31] So it does bring wealth, but it's the richness, simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we've entered the world penniless, and we leave it penniless, we have bread on the table, and shoes on our feet.

That's enough. So that's the meat and the potatoes of what I want to focus our attention on tonight. This is a call to humility in our spiritual and practical lives. But notice it's not outside of our lived experience.

We enter and leave the world the same way. The entire time we do, all have something. We have our humanity. We have our childhood in God.

We have the breath in our lungs, beating hearts, and a connection to one another and to God themselves. The writer argues that if that's what we have, then it's human almost to speak that last phrase as a mantra.

If we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that's enough. Come back to that in just one more moment. So, 9 and 10, the end of what we're looking at tonight.

[14 : 36] The lust for money brings trouble, and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

So, when Anthony emailed me, I was like, hey, here were the three that we're thinking of doing for a three-part for on giving, and like, yours is going to be 1 Timothy 6, starting at three.

I was like, cool, cool, cool, cool, cool, cool. Wait, isn't that giving Sunday? Isn't that, aren't, isn't there going to be an appeal during that? Okay, this is going to be interesting.

How do we balance these two things? And, it was interesting because I was thinking about how do we handle this at one of the wealthiest cities in the world?

I will tell you, having gone away for 10 weeks to a mid-range city in Wisconsin, lots there, lots of very happy people, and then to fly back on Wednesday morning and to land, it's coming into D.C., especially if you fly through DCA, I mean, even the way they construct it, the way you land is there to make a statement.

[15 : 45] Like, you fly over, like we were flying over the Pentagon, and I was like, okay, well, that, I forgot that happens. Interesting. Yep, you can literally see everything this city is about from about 200 feet in the air.

And so, and the funny thing was, reflecting on it, there's so many folks in our parish, both of this service and the morning service, who, they're very successful, and they have jobs that have very high salaries, and you would never know it.

Because in the West, salaries show us scope, and they show us importance. But, these folks give of their time, they give of their gifts, their spirit. And so, I had to question, like, are they on the road to ruin and destruction, as the scripture says?

And what about our siblings? I've heard of many of us who've been laid off recently, who struggle to find meaningful work just out of college, who, because of systems of oppression, are told they're unable to move out of the neighborhood they're in.

I see a lot of that in Milwaukee. Find healthy food, stable housing, who work three jobs just to make ends meet. Is the desire for financial stability somehow the slippery slope to more grief?

[16 : 55] To quote the artist's propaganda in his verse on John Macmillan's No Country, we're just trying to feed our kids. So what do we do with all this? There's this piece of the road to ruin is lust for money, but also, if we have the shoes on our feet and food on our table, that's enough.

How do we make this all work? Well, the thing I want to suggest tonight is that the writer, Paul, is actually riffing off of the Gospel of Matthew. And so we're going to look at two pieces tonight.

The middle, which is Matthew 6, we're going to look at Matthew 6, 24, and then we're going to look at the beginning of Matthew, which is the Sermon on the Mount. So.

So this is the famous God and Mammon from the middle of Matthew. Jesus is in the middle of this great sermon. It would have been on the side of a hill so everybody could hear him.

And this is really his, like, his coming out. His, like, I am the Son of God. There are other places that he has moments in which he experiences who he is, but this is his first public ministry of preaching.

[18 : 06] And in the middle of it, he says, no one can serve two masters, for they will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

But before this, and the thing he starts this whole, for Matthew 6, where he starts with, somebody in the audience says, Lord, teach us how to pray. And he goes, thanks. I was hoping you'd say that.

And he starts with the Our Father. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we've forgiven our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. So, this is his answer to how should we pray. It's not just a spiritual discussion for him, but also a cultural one.

Jesus is Jewish and a Jewish from first century Palestine. So, this is, he is making a statement about what prayer should look like. And notice what's in it. Again, it's almost like we're hearing that phrase, like if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, it's enough.

[19 : 17] We literally say to God every week here, give us this day our daily bread. And then he talks right afterwards, Jesus goes into another piece of the other really kind of big piece of Jewish culture at that time, both public and private, which was fasting.

And so he says, when you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they just figure their faces to show others their fasting. Truly, I tell you, they received the reward in full.

And it's not so much the fasting piece he's going after. What he's saying is, if you're going to do it for the sake of other people seeing you, you've gotten what you've asked for. It's funny that he ends these two pieces with a discussion on worry.

And it links the attitudes he presents to each lifestyle as he's interpreting it. And he says, therefore I tell you, don't worry about your life, what you eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

[20 : 30] Again, we hear that phrase again of, but if we have food on our table and shoes on our feet, it is enough. And he finishes with this question.

Can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life? So he's turning the culture that he lives with on its head.

And this, we can kind of make a couple of inferences. It was a very public culture, religiously public culture, and he's saying it's not about that. It's about between you and God and how you treat other people because of that relationship.

He's also saying you really shouldn't try to get anything out of it. You should just be happy with, as best you can, with the place that God has called you to be, which is different necessarily than where you are.

I don't want to confuse it tonight to say that there are systems of oppression that hold many of us back. That is not, and it was actually something that I preach against, but in this case, it is more of knowing your true self and allowing God to work through that as best as possible.

[21 : 40] And what I think Jesus is telling us is that in being human, there are certain pitfalls that we should watch out for. So, for instance, the lust of money, it's not just the Dory for Evil, and it is, for instance, our Western Industrial War Complex, Christian organizations recently being hit for fraud.

What other ones did I have here? Oh, loving families being ripped apart through inheritances, through inheritance law. But it also is a way that brings our life into a life of worry and fear, and that looks inward.

It's constantly driving us to make more, especially in this culture that we live in. So I want to pause for a minute and say that I've rarely actually met truly greedy people.

I'm sure we could come up, each one of us, maybe on our hands. Truly greedy, that's their par excellence, people. But for most of us, I think it's, at least speaking out of my own experience, I've seen money and the love of money kind of worm its way as a response for a need of control.

And that control almost always comes from a perceived or lived wound. So what are we to do? In a world that often hurts us, in a world that people use their privilege as a weapon, and frankly, there is a difference between lust of money and having the things that we need so that we can live life without social, cultural trauma, how do we find freedom from all this?

[23 : 12] Especially when we're up at night worried about the bills, worried about what our friends and our family think, worried about our basic worth when so much is expected of us. Let's go back to the very beginning of that sermon, the beginning of chapter five.

It's a road map that flips religious practice on its head and it offers perspective about life without that lust for money or without fear, the Beatitudes. So there are nine of them in the Gospel of Matthew and they go like this.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. And blessed are you who are persecuted because of righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[24 : 27] Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven for the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. So when I read this it's brilliant.

It's poetic. It's sing-songy. It's got flow. You could wrap this thing if you had it in the right translation. And it often leaves me not really questioning what's in it. Mostly because I've heard it so many times.

Because when I went back and was getting ready for this preaching and started really reading through it I was like oh gosh. And one of the things that I noticed and I want us to notice tonight is that Jesus starts each one of these things with a blessing.

The blessed are you. Blessed are our insert person here. And each one of the groups of people that he mentions are normally marginalized people in a society. So the meek for instance.

We all know that kid at our middle school who was beat up or who was ostracized because of what they loved or who they loved or what they looked like. You know that particular kid?

[25 : 32] He didn't really fight back did he? We all know the story of someone for whom the powers take away every piece of their agency that they have and they leave them hopeless.

That person God promises will inherit the earth. The morning often have we seen folks gather around those who have lost someone only for a few weeks later that person to share they feel utterly alone.

The world has moved on and it seems to be an expectation that they should too but their heart just can't and they're seeing ghosts and they don't know when if ever life will be okay.

Jesus promises them comfort. So notice the first one. The poor in spirit. Poor in spirit. To have little to nothing even if your bank account is full.

To know exactly how much you depend on the will of God. To know the darkness of your own heart that keeps you up at night. Broken promises. Lost goals. Relationships that need fixing.

[26 : 35] The prisoner. The refugee. The queer human standing in a crowded room begging for someone to notice them. Really notice them. The person of color wondering when the next George Floyd or Breonna Taylor will come.

The Israeli mother wondering if her child is alive. The Palestinian dad waiting on the same news.

The NICU baby suffering from withdrawal. The old man dying alone.

We're just trying to feed our kids. Theirs is the kingdom of God. So here's the point. Here's the point that Paul is making. Here's the point that he's saying to Timothy.

If we as a church are called to bring God's kingdom to earth are we not called to that same poverty of spirit? We're called as a community to be that blessed life.

The metric in which we measure success shouldn't be on the coolest stage set up or what the worship band is singing. Sorry worship band I love you. It should be on the generosity of hearts that make up this thing we call church.

[27 : 37] What might that look like? Let's go back one more time to 1 Tim 6. In 6 through 8 he says that about life does not bring wealth but it's the rich simplicity of being yourself before God.

Since we've entered the world penniless and leave penniless we have bread on the table and shoes in our feet that's enough. Paul tells Timothy that a church's only desire if a church's only desire is to make money then the lust for power will eventually do them in.

But the phrase if we have bread on the table and shoes in our feet that's enough what if we spoke that as a church? For instance ah man I want to help out with first impressions but I'm so busy.

How will I make time? If you're thinking that I encourage you to let God handle that last question.

And I'm going to tell you that first impressions leadership is probably going to start throwing things at me for saying this out loud.

But if it is easier for you to not be inserted into a calendar and you feel inspired on a Sunday afternoon just show up. I guarantee we'll find a spot for you.

[28 : 48] Something to do. They will definitely throw something at me after this sermon for that. Or for instance I know so and so just got that diagnosis or they've had a death in their family or they just seem off but I don't know what to do about it.

Maybe just smile a hug or simply just sit next to them the next time you see them at church. Honest does not have to be big. And to give you one more example and this is from my own life God I'm exhausted.

I've spent the whole week giving and sharing and trying and working and it's Sunday and I just want to stay home. It's been me the past six weeks since I started at St. Joe's and if anything preaching this week has reminded me that I too sometimes need to accept my pain for what it is and place it into the heart of God.

To go be with people and to be church. So I had a patient recently in our unit so I'm the emergency department and the ICU chaplain. So in the ICU we have what is called the critical care team.

This team is filled with 10 to 12 of us who are all experts in their fields. Most are doctors, couple nurses, social worker, case manager, PTOT, myself. And we do rounds every day.

[30 : 08] So what that looks like is we stand at a desk outside of somebody's room where they can't hear us and we talk about them and how we're going to help them heal for that day and the days going forward. And it starts with the intensivist who is kind of the lead and then it just goes around the room and the first like eight or nine people are all in the hard medicines.

So they got to work together because your respiratory and your heart rate and your kidneys, it's all got to balance. And then you got social work coming in because there could be things at home that are causing this.

Then he goes all the way around and I'm the last. And I go, how many people have visited them? Who's their family? Do they have a religion to practice? How do they see them? And then we go from there. So about six weeks ago, five weeks ago at this point, and I had just gotten used to rounding like this.

This was new for me. We had a patient come in. They're in their room and as we get to them we're starting to round. We just out of the blue from behind their curtain here, Celebration by Sly and the Gang.

Celebrate good times, come on. And we all crack up. We're like, and so like I told you, the intensivist goes first, Chaplin goes last because I'm the soft sciences, it's fine. I lean forward and go, um, doctor?

[31 : 24] He goes, yeah? I'm like, dibs. Chaplin calls dibs. And he goes, all right, Chaplin's got first dibs on that patient. Great. So go in to see them and they're just lovely.

They are very sick and they are just lovely. And of course, we all, over the next two weeks, fall in love with this patient. About two weeks later, on rounds, outside the room, they have just had breakfast, they are talking about going home with the case manager, we're all excited, they D-stat. D-statting is all of those numbers when you're in a hospital that talk about your body, they all go the wrong direction at once. It's not good. So, team goes in, I run to the outside of the room, praying for everybody.

About two hours later, the person is back. And I go in their room and kneel in front of them just to see if they need anything, see how they are. And they grab my hands. This whole time, they've called me pastor.

They're the only patient I've had so far that's called me pastor. I have called myself chaplain at least nine times in front of them, Pastor Chris. Okay, great. Grabs my hands and says, Pastor, Pastor, I went someplace and you all pulled me back.

[32 : 31] And then they start to cry. What do you say to that? Nothing. There's nothing to say. I knelt holding their hands for an hour, encouraging them, listening to them, because the thing I knew in that moment, and I don't know how I knew this, was the only thing that was going to help them in that moment, in that moment of crisis, was knowing that the team cared and knowing that God loved them.

The blessed life, the life of beatitude, it doesn't guarantee us a life without problems or pain.

In fact, the lust for money, why it's so attractive, is because it literally promises us that. Why am I speaking so much about this tonight? Because we're going into a season where Target will literally tell you over a commercial, they'll fix all your problems if you just buy a PS5.

No offense, Target. It's great advertising. But, beatitude promises us that no matter what, by allowing God to be present in our lives as we walk through whatever pain and hardship we go through, we will be blessed by God.

Paul tells us at the end of chapter 6, to them, to them, tell them, sorry, tell them to go after God who piles on all riches we could ever imagine, to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be

extravagantly generous.

[34 : 00] If they do that, they build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life. that's our call as church, to look out from our pews and to see the persons who suffer in our city and in our pews as blessed and to draw close to them.

And the glory of it is we can't get away from suffering. It happens to all of us from time to time. It's the great equalizer in this life. There is something true and honest about that whole death and taxes thing.

So we don't have to worry about titles or the most attractive lighting or anything else. But if we use our community, if we use the community, use our hearts to have compassion and empathy for those in our church body and a wider community, we will see God's blessing.

I want to leave you with a line. Anybody Brene Brown friends in here besides me? Cool. I think then if you are, you'll know exactly what's about to pop up. Aha.

She did this incredible interview where she talked about the difference between sympathy and empathy. She says, empathy has no script. There's no... Oh, nope. I have it backwards.

[35 : 11] Sorry. She says, rarely does an emphatic response begin with at least. For instance, my dog died. At least you have another one. Yeah, that's not very emphatic.

Someone's just shared something with us that's incredibly painful. And we're trying to put a silver lining around it. She says instead that empathy has no script. There's no right way or wrong way to do it.

It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message, you are not alone. So, what does any of this have to do with Anthony's implication 20 minutes ago?

Each one of the things we have set up here that help this place run, that generosity of heart that comes from that way, also allows for each one of us in our own gifts to be able to share that love with one another.

For some of us who are introverted, you may not want to walk up to people and be like, hi, how are you doing? My story I just told you from the ICU might just be like, you'd be like, what in the world does he do for a living?

[36 : 21] We have things for you. For the extroverts in the room who really want to get up here and do this, prayer team is always looking for members to come up, announcements, things like that.

Our technologically gifted friends, please, we love you, thank you. There's lots of things to play with back there that I would break. But each one of those things is a chance for us to acknowledge and to understand that this space here is a space of love for those who come in.

We're heading into that season of Advent. For those of you who didn't grow up with Advent, Advent's the season before Christmas in which we're waiting for Christ's coming with anticipation. We ask God to open our hearts that we might welcome more of his love for the coming of our Savior.

It's a time to look at our own calling as church. We're blessed as those who are in some way poor in spirit. Can we open our hearts this Advent to in some way notice that poverty in others and to have empathy to stand by them because we too understand it for ourselves.

If that seems impossible to you right now, if the world you're going through right now is pain and poverty and so many other things that hold us back from having any type of joy, I invite you to come to the Advent retreat on December 10th at 2 p.m.

[37 : 40] A Weary World Rejoices. It's a beautiful time to step away from the holiday bustle and to find joy in the midst of being weary and even in pain. I hope you'll join the prayer team as they are preparing for this and it really is going to be wonderful.

For tonight, one last thought as we head into communion again from Henry Nowen. The beginning and the end of all Christian leadership is to give your life for others.

Amen? Amen. Let us pray together. Father God, thank you for tonight. Thank you for the love that you show each one of us. In this moment, I ask that your spirit be in this place.

I ask that each one of us with gentleness and mercy know and see our own poverty. And from that and from your grace and your love, when we see others who are hurting, others who are in pain, when we are tempted to hold back or to not give, to be too, instead that we might find generosity in our own hearts that comes from knowing that each one of us are children of you.

And we see each person as a child of you. We give you all glory, honor, and praise. Amen.