

Pastor Charley:

And amen. You may be seated, and as you're seated, I don't want to alarm you. I'm sure some of you noticed me getting up and down and around and running around everywhere. I nicked myself shaving this morning. Can you believe that? First time in a while, and the things started gushing. So I needed to get a bandaid, so I didn't want to preach with blood all over my cheek. That'd be an interesting experience for you, wouldn't it?

Well, I've got good news and I've got more good news for you today. The first good news is this, our church, our children's ministry is busting at the seams. Isn't that great? Yeah. Busting at the seams here at Johns Creek, and it's amazing. Our nursery, I mean, we've had to expand the nursery. We've got babies, we've got toddlers, we've had to hire some new nursery workers to help us. And of course, our study school classes are busting at the seams too. We've got more and more and more and more kids, and that is a wonderful problem to have.

And here's the second good news. Some of you have an amazing opportunity to volunteer to teach our little ones in Sunday school. Seriously, pray to the Lord today and ask if that's something that you feel called to do and are being called to do. There's nothing greater. There's nothing more rewarding than teaching kids the faith. And I know many of you would enjoy that and be fulfilled by it, and we would love to have you do it. So want to be sure that I make that announcement today.

Also want to say that I felt led this morning to go in a different direction. So here's the cliffhanger. What's the great omission? Well, you're going to have to find out another week because I feel led to go in a different direction. I know that disappoints some of you, but the line begins here after worship. Okay?

Let's be in an attitude of prayer together. Eternal God, we do thank you for the gift of this service, the gift of this church. You help it to grow, you grow it, Lord. We plant and we water and we remain faithful, but it's you that grows the church. And so we rely on your power and your strength and your spirit as we continue to serve.

And Lord, now I rely on your spirit to help me preach a word from you that'll make a difference to our lives today. Because every one of us comes to worship today with one question. "Lord, is there a word from you today?" In the midst of the weeks that we've had and the circumstances we're in, Lord, is there a word from you today?" Lord make me equal to the task of preaching that word to these my friends and your servants. It's in Christ's name we pray, amen.

I don't know about you, but I'm really getting sick and tired of all the bad news that we are bombarded with every single day. Whether you turn on the computer or look at your phone or turn on the television, there is bad news all over the place, the natural disasters, the poverty, the shootings, on and on and on and on it goes.

And it's not just bad news here in the community that we are aware of, it's the bad news everywhere around the world. Now I'm a big fan of technology. I really am. I think it's great in many ways, but I don't believe our brains have been wired to be bombarded this much with this much bad news. I mean, the other day I was looking at my phone and for five minutes, I was looking at all this bad news.

In five minutes, I came across a story about a natural disaster. I came across a story about a mass shooting. I came across a story about human trafficking. I came across a story about domestic violence, on and on and on and on it goes. And it's really overwhelming.

Of course you put on top of that are personal problems and struggles. We hear all the bad news out there, but we have our own bad news and we have our own issues to deal with, don't we? In our lives, our relationship struggles perhaps, maybe we have health issues of some sort. There's a problem at

work, there's a problem with the boss. There's some issue that we're dealing with and we feel overwhelmed.

And the third layer of course is if you're someone that works in the church as clergy or laity, you are bombarded by more bad news. We hear prayer requests all the time and we love and we are happy to pray for people, but sometimes it's clergy. We love this church so much and it's such a big church, it can be overwhelming. All the prayer requests for the sicknesses and the relationship problems and the addictions. And sometimes it can just get too much and get overwhelming.

And our awareness has changed. There were days way back when there was news shared, you heard about the news just in your small area. Unfortunately now, we are forced to see bad news everywhere going around, all around the world. And that is overwhelming. And I don't know how you feel about it. Not only is it overwhelming to me because it's just so much bad news, but it's also overwhelming for me.

And see if you feel this way because so often I feel like I can't do anything about it. I want to help. I want to heal. I want to change the situation. I want to fix it, but I really can't do anything about it. I see it's going on. I see there is a problem. I see there is an issue, but I can't do anything about it. And maybe some of you have the attitude, "Well, Charlie, really that's just life. Just turn off your phone for a little while, turn off your computer, turn off your television, and just get back to work and get back to life."

And I get that. I understand that. But what if you can't turn it off? What if you keep remembering that Christ calls you to be compassionate, to serve, to give? What if you can't get the pictures out of your mind? What if you can't get the hurt of other people out of your mind? What if you really want to do something about it, but yet you feel helpless and overwhelmed?

Well, I bet you'll be surprised to know that I have an answer for you today. How's that? I have a solution for us today, for us not to feel so overwhelmed when it comes to all the problems in the world and for us to be encouraged to do something about it. And that answer comes from scripture, more specifically from the Apostle Paul who is writing one of the earliest letters he wrote to the Christians in Galatia and contained within that particular letter.

And it's amazing word. Galatians has all kinds of amazing things, but contained within that letter is the answer, is the encouragement for us, for many of us as followers of Jesus Christ who feel overwhelmed by all the problems around us, but we feel we can't do anything about it.

Let's begin here. In verse nine, it says this, Paul says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time. We will reap a harvest if we do not give up." You see what Paul is doing here? He is encouraging us because he gets it. He's saying, I know it's difficult. I know there are times when you feel like giving up, you're always kind, and yet no one seems to be kind around you. You're always serving, you're always giving. And yet sometimes it feels like you're not making a dent at all. You stay faithful. You keep coming to church, keeps serving the way you're called to serve. And yet sometimes it feel likes it, it's just an act of futility.

And what Paul is saying here is don't give up. Don't stop. Don't stop serving. Don't stop giving. Don't stop healing because one day it will pay off. And he continues. "Therefore," and this is important, "As we have opportunity," that's a big word, "Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

What is Paul saying? He's saying, yes, don't give up, but understand if you feel overwhelmed, just concentrate on those around you. Focus on those around you. Because I believe there are opportunities to help people all around our small circles. And I believe that God often reveals to us, God opens our eyes to those people who need our help, who need our kind words, who need our assistance. And if we will ask God to open our eyes, he will show us those people in those situations.

And a little earlier in verse two, Paul would say this, "Carry each other's burdens. And in this way, you'll fulfill the law of Christ." Paul is reminding us that when we serve and when we stay faithful and when we help, we are fulfilling what Christ calls us to do. Because the premier message of the New Testament is that those of us who follow Jesus Christ, those of us who truly want to follow Jesus Christ, cannot shut our eyes to the problems around us. We are called to do something.

And those of us in the United Methodist tradition, we know this, we love John Wesley. Oh, John Wesley, his contribution to the Christian faith is enormous. But one of the things he focused on was this, our faith is not only about personal piety. So often people think that, and it's all about just me and Jesus. I'll sing songs to Jesus and I'll pray to Jesus, he's my friend and I'll get close to him. And that is wonderful. And that is certainly part of the faith. But Wesley reminded us that faith is personal piety with social responsibility. We can't get closer to Jesus Christ without getting closer to other people. So what's the answer? What's the solution for us for those of us who feel so overwhelmed that we feel like we can't do anything about all the problems in the world?

Well, I have a solution for you. And here it is. It doesn't come from me. It's not original to me, but it preaches baby. Let me tell you. And here it is. "Do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody." Can you say that with me? "Do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody." Say it again. "Do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody."

And see, often our problem is that we feel so overwhelmed by the problems of the world and we say, "Well, I can't solve world hunger and I can't bring world peace. Therefore, what's the point?" And so in our thinking that we can't help everybody, we help no one. But we're called to take advantage of the opportunities that are all around us because Christ calls us to do it. Can we help everybody? No, we can't, but we can help someone.

So here's my prayer for all of us today and for all of you and for me, sometime in the worship service today, I want you to pray this prayer silently to the Lord. And maybe you want to pray it during the sermon. Right now, say, Lord, open my eyes to somebody. Just one person who needs help. One person who needs the light of Christ, one person who needs some kind of kindness.

If you're a kid in the service today, maybe it's that new kid in your neighborhood and they just moved in and the kid has no friends and the family feels it's culture shock and they have no one. Maybe it's befriending them. Maybe it's talking to that coworker who just seems so depressed and you never really talked to them before, but maybe you feel led to say something to them. Say some kind of kind word and say, "Listen, I'm here to listen if you want me to listen." Maybe it's that family that you're close to that's dealing with all kinds of problems.

You see, so often in my ministry, it's really interesting what I discover, is so often when people are in need, and we know about people who are in need, because we feel so awkward and because we feel we don't know what really to say, we don't do anything at all. And I tell you, there has been times so often in my ministry where someone will come to me and they'll be so upset about a friend they thought they had in the church and they knew this friend knew what they were going through in their life. And yet they said, "But they walked away from me the other day and they didn't say anything to me."

Nine times out of 10, you want to know why they do that? Because they feel awkward and they don't know what to say. Take that risk. Just do it. Just go up to them and say, "I'm here to listen. You seem different lately and I don't know why and it's really none of my business, but I'll tell you, I'm here for you." You can imagine the difference that will make.

We underestimate kindness. We really do. There are people all around this community, in your neighborhood and even in this church, in this sanctuary right now who are hanging on by a thread. And imagine what a smile would do, what a word like, you know what? You look really nice today would do.

And here's another suggestion I'll give. Invest yourself and your time into the person. Now, let me tell you, so often it's so easy to just write a check to the church or write a check somewhere and just give it in the go on our merry way. And don't get me wrong, we love your checks. Amen. Please keep writing those checks. But we need to give more than that. We need to give our presence. We need to invest ourselves. Last time I checked, whenever somebody joins the church, they take these membership vows. I vow to commit to Christ and John's Creek United Methodist Church with my prayers and my presence and my gifts and my service and my witness.

I was talking to somebody the other day, sometime ago, they got really upset with the church, me. I know every once in a while that happens. I know you're shocked by that. Because we often send out letters because we want an active church role of who's active in the church. And so often we send out letters because we miss these people and we want to know what's going on with them and how they're doing and where they are. Because oftentimes people will move away to Alaska and not tell us. So we got to know.

So we ask him, we miss you. We'd love to have you come back into the fall, but could you tell us where you are and what you're doing? And I was talking to somebody the other day who got that letter, who got so mad, mad at me. And we talked and I said, "Listen, we miss you. We miss you. We need you to be here." And I said to him, "You know what? And I know that the happiest you've ever been is when you've been active in the church. The most fulfilled you've ever been is when you're serving with a body of believers and investing yourself into giving. That's the happiest and most fulfilled you've ever been. I know that. And you know that."

And then I said this to them, "Remember those vows you took to the church? Prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness." Want to know why I give that three point sermon every time somebody joins the church? Yeah, it's for them, but mostly it's for all of us to remind us, invest.

If your passion is youth. I know Philip, Phillip, you could use some people helping in the youth group, couldn't you and youth ministry help serve food to these kids? I mean, what are you doing? Are you going to miss five minutes of a ballgame or something? Go help. Or maybe earlier I mentioned the children's ministry, maybe you feel called to do that. And recently we've asked people to sign up, what is it? Every six weeks, give 20 minutes to the church by greeting. Is that what it is?

You know what? If you have a problem committing to 20 minutes every six weeks? Let me tell you, you need to reorganize your priorities. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Charley:

Oh, I'm getting a Madeline now, aren't I? Maybe it's a ministry that you wish the church would start. Come to us, come to me. We'll see what we can do. We'll pray about it. What is the one thing you feel called to invest in? Then do it, do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody. And let me give you just two quick examples. Quite often we like to say bad things about social media, the awful things that it does to our culture and world. And kids are always on Instagram and always on TikTok and always on Facebook.

And incidentally, I was talking to a kid the other day about TikTok, and you know what? She had the audacity to say to me? She said, "You know what? You're too old for TikTok. Don't do TikTok." I said, okay, "Thanks." She goes, "Stick to Facebook. That's where all the old people are." Now, that hurt a little.

But we often say bad things about social media. But you know what? It can be used for good to help somebody. This is a true story. Some years ago there was a one day old baby who was abducted from a hospital, named Baby Victoria. Unfortunately, the security cameras caught the abductor. She was disguised as a nurse and she carried the baby out in a blue blanket and the cops were able to get a picture of her face. And then the police put out this alert all over social media. All over social media.

And there were four young adults. They were in their late 20s, I believe. And they were just laying around the house one day, scrolling through their phones, and they came across this alert, which was right in their area. And the alert said, "This person will be driving a red car." And you know what they did? They said, "What the heck? Let's share this and go out and see." And you know what they found? They found that red car and they found that person. And she was arrested, and Baby Victoria was returned to her mama. Just one click, just one share, just 20 minutes looking for a car.

Now, could they save every kid who's been kidnapped? No, but they saved that one. Do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody. Here's a note, last example. There was a kid in the Philippines who just decided to go walking in the afternoon. His father thought it was strange because his kid never did that. He just went off walking. So one day the father was curious and he followed his son. You know what that kid was doing? He was going to these three small puppies dying and starving in the streets and feeding them and helping them. And the dad was so moved that began to help.

Fast-forward, many years later, they started the Happy Pets Club, which is the only nonprofit animal shelter in the Philippines, because of a walk and three small puppies. Now can that kid save all the puppies in the world. No, but he saved those. Do for somebody what you wish you could do for everybody. And here's the thing, if every Christian had that attitude every day, this world would change. But you know what? Your world will change too.

Let's pray. Eternal God, remind us that there is something we can do, something you call us to do, to serve you, to help you. Oh, forgive us when we get so into ourselves that we forget, there are people all around us every day who are hurting, who need the love and the faith that we have. Oh Lord, convict us and open our eyes to reveal your love to them. It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.