

# December 6, 2015

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Date: 06 December 2015

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning everyone. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. If any of the kids want to come up and sing, that would be wonderful.
- This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made. Good morning. Welcome to our church.
- We have a gift for our visitors at the Connection site. Please fill out your friendship card for any prayers or concern or just so we can get to know you. It's fun to be part of the welcoming committee here at Hamilton Center.
- [ 1 : 1 8 ]     And we are glad to have you here with us this morning. There's a few things I want to share with you. First of all, the clipboard's going around. The ministry opportunity is cookies. We need cookies. We need cookies for all sorts of events and activities and things.
- Particularly this Saturday we have our Christmas pageants with the children. It's at noon here at the church and so we invite you to that. And also for our cantata, which is Sunday night at 7 o'clock.
- It sounds like a fantastic group of people, both singing and the orchestra. It's about 120 or 130 people, I think, involved in the performance.
- So it's a great opportunity to celebrate Christmas. I also want to mention that after service today, out in the fellowship hall near the fireplace, they're going to give a preview of a financial seminar that they're putting out.
- This is really just an opportunity to take some of the biblical principles of God to help people to understand how to better manage their finances. So if that's something you're looking to do, you can talk to the people out there.
- [ 2 : 2 0 ]     Something offered by some of the people of the church, if you're interested. We have another announcement. Agape, the youth ministry that meets on Sunday afternoons, is canceled for today.
- And we will be meeting again not until January 3rd. So Agape is not going to be meeting through December. So if you're planning to come today, we're canceling. And I just want to remind you, I know it's a little early, but Christmas Eve, 5 o'clock, 7 o'clock, and 11 o'clock.
- Those are our worship services. Thank you. Let's be in prayer. Dear God in heaven, pour out your blessings upon us. Fill us with a spirit of worship. That we might experience your presence in this place.
- That we might know that you are our God. Take away the distractions of the world. And just bless us with you. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. And it is the second week of Advent.

So as we light our Advent candles, hear these words from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1. And Mary said, And Mary said, My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

[ 3 : 22 ] For he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me.

Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. I'd like to invite you all to stand here for Abel. As our soul magnifies the Lord. Perhaps, you know, ■■■men, you know, But everything everything else you have Would be profound.

For everything one and every man This will be a sign to you A name of Adieous Mag lulls Come and worship Do not be afraid Lord not be afraid A company of angels Glory to the highest And the earth is so hard As a new misrepresent Come and worship Do not be afraid My soul, my soul Magnifies the Lord, my soul Magnifies the Lord He has done great things for me

[ 5 : 22 ] Great things for me Unto you a child is born Unto us a son is given Let every heart with arrows grow In every nation under bed Come and worship Do not be afraid My soul, my soul Magnifies the Lord He has done great things for me Great things for me Great things for me And His government There will be no end In the salvation With His righteousness And He shall be A name that's born

A name that's born And we shall hear A mystery on Wonderful Wonderful counselor Wonderful counselor Everlasting Father Wonderful counselor Everlasting Father My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord My soul, magnifies the Lord He has done great things for me Great things for me My soul, my soul, magnifies the Lord My soul, magnifies the Lord

He has done great things for me Great things for me The Lord be with you And also with you Take a moment, if you will, and greet your neighbor with the peace of the spirit I'm going to invite the kids to come up and put an ornament on the tree Any kids want to come up and put an ornament on the tree?

Come on ahead When you're done with your ornament, come on over here Come on up kids You want to put an ornament on the tree? Go ahead Then come on over here Michael's meeting Any other kids want to come up?

Come on right up here or you can go put an ornament on the tree Either way Good morning, how are you guys doing this morning? That's good You know, we're talking about somebody special this morning And we don't normally have her here so early This is somebody named Mary That's right, Mary And Mary had an appearance by an angel And an angel appeared to her and said She's going to have Anybody know what?

[ 9 : 03 ] A baby Yes, a baby And he's going to save the whole world And so she sang a song Which is what we just sang Actually, very close to that song And with her was a goat And a sheep I just made that up I don't know if they were actually with her But I got a goat and I got a sheep Because later on we're going to talk about goats and sheep We want to be the kind of people God wants us to be And in the Bible it says that we should be like sheep Not like goats Because goats are mean And sheep are nice and loving Okay And Mary sang a song to talk about how we need to love everybody Everybody No matter who they are Okay What do you guys thankful for this morning?

You want to share something? Raise your hand if you do Thank you for everything and including my family Friends and family My mom and dad My family and friends Family My mom and dad Everything My family and friends My friends and family Wood and water Family My family and friends Friends and family My mom and dad Friends and family My mom and dad My mom and dad

All right Dear Lord we thank you for our parents Our family Our friends All the good and exciting things that are going on this time of year Bless us and help us to care for people And help people Just like Mary wanted us to do For it's in Jesus name we pray Amen You guys are welcome to go out to church school now if you'd like to All the kids are welcome to go out to church school In your church bulletin this morning you'll see a mission moment offering You know we take these up through the years And we offer a variety of different options that you can give We don't expect everybody to give to every mission moment Because obviously some touch certain hearts And others touch other people's hearts This one particularly touches my heart We call it the Good Samaritan Fund And what we do with this fund Is we help people in your church So this is for people in the pews next to you

It could be at this time of year at Christmas To try and make their lives a little bit better and easier When they're struggling to pay their bills or get by It could be an emergency situation Where somebody's just in a jam or in trouble Everything that you give Goes to help people sitting right next to you So that's why I consider it special Because it's something we do for our church family As you'd like to give to the Good Samaritan Fund Or as you brought your tithes and offerings We thank God for all he's done And all he's given to be a blessing in our lives And we return our Thanksgiving this morning We're gonna make a wish this Christmas I'm gonna say a little prayer I'm gonna stop here for a moment Before the moment disappears

The world's in a hurry this December City streets and shopping malls Wish we could slow down and remember The meaning of it all Wherever you are Wherever you are No matter how far Come back to the heart The heart of Christmas Live while you can And cherish the moment And the ones that you love Make sure they know it And don't miss it The heart of Christmas Let's make it feel the way it used to

[ 13 : 52 ] Let's make the wonder of a child You can play the magic all around you Come on and open up your eyes You can find it In the warm embrace of your family Calling up a long lost friend You can even find it In the eyes of a stranger When you reach out a helping hand Wherever you are No matter how far Come back to the heart The heart of Christmas Live while you can And cherish the moment And the ones that you love Make sure they know it And don't miss it The heart of Christmas

In the shadow of a star That lights away You will find him in a danger The heart of Christmas Has a name I'm gonna make a wish this Christmas I'm gonna say a little prayer Wherever you are No matter how far Come back to the heart The heart of Christmas Live while you can Cherish the moments And the ones that you love Make sure they know it And wherever you are No matter how far Come back to the heart The heart of Christmas Live while you can And cherish the moments

And the ones that you love Make sure they know it And don't miss it The heart of Christmas And the ones that you love Hallelujah May you read If you came back to the heart When you be TRIVE If you want It'll miss it And don't miss it Yellow If you come back to the heart Please come back to the heart

Please come back to the heart For those bit Of the heart Bye come back to the heart Let us Will And ■■■■ Whether you Auf Lord, we thank you for these gifts that you have given to us.

And we pray that the gifts we give back to you will be a blessing in this world, that people may experience your joy and your love through them. Give us your wisdom that we may be a light by using the gifts that you've provided.

[ 17 : 25 ] And may these blessings be a blessing to the world. In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated. Thank you. We have a couple of concerns in our church community, and I'm sure there's many, many more than this.

Please pray for the Fisher family. Liz Fisher's father passed away, Bob Wood, so please keep them in prayer. Also, please pray for my daughter, Olivia. She was rear-ended the other day, and she has a sprained cervical in her neck, and she's in a lot of pain, and her car's not good either.

So pray for a new car. And we have a great joy. Lindsay McMichael, which is Diane Wentz's daughter, had another baby. Baby boy, November 30th.

Landon Richard is a little guy, five pounds, seven ounces. So, yeah, little guy. So lots of joys, lots of concerns. So let's turn to the Lord in prayer this morning.

Gracious Lord, we thank you for your love and your presence and your joy, and we pray that you will fill us each this day.

[ 18 : 34 ] Help us to know that you are there for us as we go through trying times. We pray for those who are struggling with illnesses and family members going through illnesses as well.

We pray that your healing touch will come upon people in need, that physical ailments will be healed, that you will guide the doctor's hands, that people may experience your healing.

I pray for the families who are going through struggles and trials as they try to comfort and support those who are struggling with physical ailments and any other things.

We pray, Lord, that you will give them your peace and your presence. Give them words. Sometimes, and sometimes the words aren't there. We pray for our families that are struggling and feeling broken, that your love will abound, that joy will be filled, and that as families look upon one another, they see you and they come closer together.

We pray for the healing of our families. We pray for the healing of our nation, which is broken, and there's so much violence and people are afraid, and we pray that your peace will come upon us.

[ 20 : 09 ] Open our eyes to see your goodness. Give us your courage, your strength, your support, and your wisdom as we move forward. May the brokenness be healed and mended through you.

May we pray for a world that is beyond anything we can fix, but we know that you are a good and great God and that you can do mighty things, and we pray that your goodness will shower upon the entire world and fill up the people.

We're trusting in you and we love you. May we be a blessing in everything we do.

In Jesus' name, amen. Let's hear from the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Let's hear from the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 21 : 20 ] Amen. Good morning. Today's scripture reading is from Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 through 46.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels are with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my father, take your inheritance. The kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you looked after me. I was in prison, and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The king will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in. I needed clothes, and you did not clothe me.

I was sick and in prison, and you did not look after me. They will also answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or needing clothes, or sick or in prison, and did not help you? He will reply, Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God.

[ 23 : 33 ] Thank you, Noah. We call this Advent season in the church because we look forward to the coming of our Lord. Coming of our Lord in the manger at Bethlehem, coming of the Lord in our hearts, coming of the Lord someday to reclaim all of creation and acclaim us. And so we're looking at different parables through the course of this time we have together before Christmas of the end of time.

Sheep and the govtins. When did we see you sick or hungry or lonely or thirsty or in need of a visit, and we weren't there for you, God? I don't remember that time.

God has tests for who we are and what we are that we don't always recognize. I don't know if you've actually noticed the verse on the very back wall of the sanctuary as you go out that says, Be careful how you treat strangers because you may be entertaining angels unaware.

In the book of Proverbs, it says to us, Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and God will reward them for what they have done.

Once upon a time, there was a king. He wanted to know what things were like in his kingdom and how the people talked about him and whether they were doing what they were supposed to do and whether they were taking care of things in the way they should.

[ 25 : 10 ] So he put on a disguise so people wouldn't recognize him any longer as the king and went to work among them to listen to what they had to say, to do what they had to do, to be a part of who they were, and we call it undercover boss.

Maybe you've seen the show. Fascinating experience where the boss dresses up like one of the workers. And what I find fascinating is that the CEOs never seem to be able to do anything productive in the course of this.

That should be the giveaway right away, that this is somebody who it doesn't appear to be. And yet somehow they're fooled. And they say, What's really going on?

God comes to be amongst us. And God is actually in all the people that you see. I have people say to me, I'd like to see God.

Well, look around the room. You'll see God. Look around in the faces of the people you pass in the street. You'll see God because we're all made in God's image. And there's people in this world who are hurting.

[ 26 : 20 ] And the interesting part is many of them are Christians. When did we see you hungry or thirsty? Or needing somebody to visit you?

Or without clothing? Or a place to live? It's fascinating that the things that are mentioned here are basic needs. Not desires or wants.

It's not, you know, We needed a better cell phone plan and you wouldn't pay for it. Or we wanted cable TV and you only gave us the basic plan. When did we see you without the basic needs of life?

And not take care of you? We live in an incredibly prosperous culture. You all know that. We've talked about that before. Unfortunately, in the midst of that prosperity, There's a tendency toward not only greed, But a concern that somehow if we give, We'll end up without enough.

In the book of Deuteronomy, God said to the Israelites, If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites In any of the towns of the land the Lord your God has given you, Don't be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them.

[ 27 : 36 ] Rather be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need. Whatever they need. People who are hungry and thirsty.

I went to Applebee's the other night. I had this new dish that I wanted to try. It's sort of a chicken dish with apples and rice and stuff mixed together. Looked good on the menu, so I ordered it.

And it came out and there's this little plate of food. I'm like, seriously, really? Now, I don't want you to misunderstand. I ate it and I was full when I was done. But we have come to assume that when we go out to eat, There should be enough food to feed four of us in one dinner, right?

But we got ripped off. I can't believe they just gave me that little bit of food. I mean, seriously, were they trying to make me healthy? We throw away food. I read somewhere that more than half the vegetables that are grown in this country end up in the garbage.

Fascinating how we just have food to get rid of. No one should be hungry. Ever. Ever in a culture that can throw food away.

[ 28 : 47 ] I was hungry. You gave me something to eat. I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

You know, that's such an easy thing to do, isn't it? Hi, my name's Tom. How you doing? Do we welcome our strangers like we welcome friends? I was out with a group of people the other day and I saw somebody across the room and it was like, Hi, hey, how you doing?

But do we welcome everybody that way? Or is it just the ones we recognize? Even in church, we walk our way through the folks pretending they're not there to get to the one we want to say hello to.

Maybe we could greet people through the crowd. Hi, my name's Tom. Hi, my name's Tom. That's the one I want to get to. At least say hello. Hello. People say to me, Well, I don't know if they're new to the church or not.

Why would it make any difference? Why would it matter who they are? You don't know them. They go to your church. Say hello. We don't say hello to our own people.

[ 29 : 55 ] Get so focused on everyone else. You ever been a stranger? Have you ever had somebody say hello to you when you're a stranger and you feel like the world just lit up?

I need the clothes. And you gave me clothing. Now, tell me, seriously. I honestly believe that if I took all the clothes in my house, I could put clothing on the backs of every single person in this room.

And I bet you could, too. How many of you have tried to stuff these into your closet? You know, years ago, have you ever been to an old house?

Their closets are like this wide. You know why? They only had like six sets of clothes. What you wore to church on Sunday, you wore to church every Sunday.

You know how easy it would have been this morning? There it is. Sunday clothes. Boom. Off we go. You wore that last week. Yeah, I've worn it for the last 50, 100 weeks here. You know, hello. This is what I wear.

[ 31 : 00 ] It's Sunday. We don't just have Sunday clothes and Monday clothes and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday clothes. We've got 10 or 15 or 20 sets of Sunday clothes.

How can anybody possibly need clothes in this world? You see, it's not because we don't have enough. We live in a culture filled with prosperity.

So it certainly is not that the resources don't exist. It's a condition of our hearts. It's fascinating that as they talk about eternal life in verse 34 of this passage, they talk about it as an inheritance, a benefit, not something that you actually even earn so much as it's just a condition of who you are already.

You are amongst the sheep and so you are blessed in this life and the one to come or you are amongst the goats and so you are cursed. And it's not just about their actions, but about inactions because oftentimes we think of sin as something we do when oftentimes sin is something we neglect to do.

I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was in need and you didn't do anything for me. Matthew chapter 13 quotes Isaiah saying, you'll be ever hearing but never understanding.

[ 32 : 26 ] You'll be ever seeing but never perceiving. This people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears. They have closed their eyes.

About a month ago, it was before Thanksgiving, I went into a store. It was little Salvation Army people with their red pots and their bells ringing.

So I'm walking into the store and my grandson says, hey Papa, look, one of those Salvation Army things, we could put some money in it. And I said, I can't believe I said this, I said, no, it's too early, they shouldn't be out there.

Really? Really? Did I say that? Did that come out of my mouth to my teenage grandson? What kind of an image is that? Ah, I said it.

I said it. Do you know how much money I'm going to have to give to the Salvation Army to assuage my guilty heart now? No more change. It's got to be paper every single time now.

[ 33 : 30 ] What is it? What causes us to say these things? Or do these things? It's fascinating that in this passage, about people who are going to go to eternal glory or eternal destruction, there's nothing about what they believe.

It's nothing about how they worship. It's nothing about the sacrifices they made. It's nothing about rituals at all. Whether their eyes could see.

Why did we see you like this? And you know, yes, it was the goats that we focus on who didn't have their eyes open, but even the people who were sheep didn't get it.

I don't remember this either. Because it's all about what's inside. In Titus, he says to us, people claim to know God, but their actions deny God.

They're detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good. If you're messed up and you've got the wrong attitude towards everything, you can't do it right.

[ 34 : 49 ] Where do we see God? Where do we even look for God? Do we look for God in the angels, in the sky? Do we look for God in the miracles? Do we look for God in the power and the wonder?

Do we look for God in the pain and the struggle and the trauma? Who wants to be around a sheep? Sheep are kind of like weak, manby-pamby, loser animals, you know?

They're not very smart. Push them around. They're really kind of... I just want to be a sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I just want to be a sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba.

I pray the Lord my soul to keep. I just want to be a sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I don't know if I do. I mean, really. Sheep. They're kind of like on the bottom of the barrel here.

We're made in God's image. But where do we see God? Where do we even look for God? What would we do if we heard that somebody, somebody who is famous or powerful or wealthy was coming to church today?

[ 35 : 58 ] What if it was clear that somebody told us that that Zuckerberg or whatever his name, a guy who just gave away 40-some bazillion dollars, if he was coming to church today? Is he here yet?

Looking out the windows, watching for the car. The governor's coming. Really? Really? I wonder if he'll sit near me. I wonder if he'll sit near me. Do we look for God only in those places?

It's fascinating what we will do for the people who already have a lot. The people who are famous, we'll give them more attention. The people who are wealthy, we give them more money. The people who are powerful, we think need to have more power.

And the people who are struggling and the people who are in trouble and the people who are hurting, we just push them aside. And Jesus says, blessed are the poor. Blessed are the hungry. Blessed are the persecuted.

Blessed are the thirsty. Jesus turns it all upside down. He just messes with our whole image of what life is supposed to be about. Who wants to be a sheep?

[ 37 : 04 ] James chapter 2 says, as a body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds, without actions, is dead.

It's not just about not doing the wrong thing. It's about doing the right thing. You can change the world.

You really can change the world. I know it seems impossible. We don't have bazillions of dollars to give away. How could we possibly change the world?

Because together we can do so much. You'd be amazed at what we already do together. I don't know if you're aware of it.

This church probably gives away, I don't know, \$150,000, \$200,000 a year to help people. That's what we do. Probably there's no one in this room that could do that.

[ 38 : 05 ] Or maybe they could, but they wouldn't. But together we can. We feed people regularly in Buffalo, in Niagara Falls. We do that together. Have you ever seen those Christmas boxes?

What's most touching, the most touching thing about the Christmas boxes, most of you never see. I come in here sometimes, and I'm just wandering around, and I see somebody show up with their box.

They only have one. And you see them come in, because they heard about us somewhere. I don't know where they even find out about us. And they walk in with their box, and they come into the sanctuary. They've got the little treasures that they put together to help somebody in the world.

And they walk in here, and they go, wow. When they see all those boxes, and you probably have never seen this, they walk up with their box, and they have to find just the right spot to put their box, even though they know it's going to blend into this huge amount of boxes, because they realize at that moment that what they were doing is just a part of something huge.

We can do amazing things together. Somebody, it wasn't me, created this thing called the Advent Conspiracy. It's a clever thing. It says that in the season of Advent, as we prepare for God, we need to worship fully.



[ 39 : 33 ] We talked about that last week. We need to spend less money on Christmas gifts. We talked about that a couple weeks ago. We need to give more, and we need to love everyone.

And if we do that, believe it or not, we can make things happen we would think otherwise are impossible. Solomon once said, there's one who scatters, and yet increases all the more.

There's one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it only results in want. What's that about? How does a person disperse all his stuff and end up with more?

How can a person hold on to something and end up in need? The average family will spend \$1,700 on Christmas gifts this year.

That will mean cutting a few of those lower limbs for sure. It takes a lot of room to put \$447 billion worth of gifts under every tree in America.

[ 40 : 37 ] Solomon's economics turn everything upside down. Less under my tree is actually more.

One less gift under my tree becomes one more book for seminary students in Nigeria. One more breakfast for kids in Peru. One more bag of seed in Sudan.

One more Bible study in Croatia. One more church plant planning retreat in Germany. And one more opportunity to share the gospel in Russia. Less under our trees means more for the world.

More of what matters most. More of who we celebrate in this season. It means more of Jesus. His birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection proclaimed more as we have less.

Jesus said, Give and it will be given to you. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over. Sounds like he believes Solomon.

[ 41 : 49 ] If we put less under our trees each Christmas, it means more, and more, and more, for the world. The purpose of this life is...

But that doesn't mean we're supposed to ignore this world along the journey. We say the prayer, don't we? Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth.

On earth. As it is in heaven. An incarnational faith. A faith where Jesus is born into the world.

Resensitizing ourselves to the world around us. So that we see the needs. And we see the faces. And we see the hurts. And we see the pains.

What are we doing? The fascinating thing is, you know, this little video implies that if we have less under our tree, it will give more somewhere else.

[ 43 : 04 ] And that's where we see the world. If I have a book and give it to you, I no longer have a book. But that would mean that we only believe in the rules of possibilities of this world.

But with God, He can create things out of nothing. He's the only one that can make something out of nothing. So when God says He can give more to you, He can give you more without taking it from somewhere else.

Only God can do that. And He does it when we live in incarnational faith. We need to make the effort first. And it's not always easy.

It's not always convenient. It isn't always profitable. People will say to me, well, what should I do? Well, we talked about the Good Samaritan Fund.

That's an easy place. Or how about those angel tree tags? You know, the first couple weeks, I don't even have to talk about it because people go out and they take every four and five and six and three-year-old off the tree.

[ 44 : 14 ] Now it's the 11, 12, 13, 14-year-olds. That's not as much fun to buy for those, Pastor Tom. Besides, some of those people want an Xbox.

Yes, of course. They dream like your kids dream. They hope like your kids hope. They don't have to have that. They can have something else.

It doesn't matter. What do we do? What are we going to do? I visit people who are sick, people who are vulnerable, people who are hurting.

And you know what they often say to me? They say, where are my friends? Why haven't they called me? Why don't they visit? I usually make excuses for you because that's the best I can do.

I don't know. We're afraid. We don't want to go near the sick. You ever go in the hospital and they've got those rooms where sometimes you've got to put on the gowns and gloves and masks and everything?

[ 45 : 22 ] I usually don't see them. I've got a nurse chasing me. Get out of there. You're going to pull this stuff on. You know? I guess I was just exposed to something. Whatever. Whatever. I know.

That's not the point. I know. I know. You can explain it to me later. But it can be hard work taking care of the sick. It can be hard work noticing when somebody's hurting.

It can be hard work to go and talk to people that you don't feel comfortable talking to right now. Hard work to visit those who are in prison.

Wow. They'll even take you and start treating you like a criminal. I know. I've been there. And sometimes we just don't see it.

We don't see it. A couple days ago I was out to lunch at Olive Garden. And as I walked in the restaurant there's an old lady in a wheelchair sitting in the entranceway all by herself.

[ 46 : 33 ] I thought, man, that's weird. You know? Who left this old lady in the middle? It was just straight. Why is this old lady sitting in the entranceway by herself? That just didn't seem right.

So I kind of stayed like the doorman just opening the door for people. I figured that would let me just hang around keep an eye on the old lady. Make sure, you know, everything's okay here. Then I saw the car pull up to pick her up and I said, okay, that's good.

And I went in the restaurant. Because of course I had people waiting for me. I couldn't just, you know, stay out there. Like it would have mattered if I would have taken two more minutes to help them get the old lady into the car, right?

But I was in a hurry. I had people waiting for me. Like anybody would have cared if I took an extra minute just to help. Why don't we not see this stuff? What's wrong with us?

What's wrong with us? I don't want to be a goat. No. I don't want to be a goat. No. Because there's no hope.

[ 47 : 38 ] No. I don't want to be a goat. No. You know, goats are in the Bible in a few places. One of the first places we see them is in the book of Leviticus.

Many of you may not realize it, but the original sin offering for the people of Israel was a goat. They were supposed to bring two goats. The first goat was going to be taken and used as the sacrificial animal for the sins of the people.

They did this later on with sheep and lambs. But in that day, it was a goat. And they would offer it up to God as a symbolic sacrifice for their sins.

But they had a second goat. The second goat, they would put all their sins on that goat. I committed adultery. Now it's on you, goat. I stole.

Now it's on you, goat. I lied. It's your fault, goat. I was mean to my mom and dad. It's your fault, goat. And they would pray all their sins onto this little goat.

[ 48 : 43 ] And then they would literally push the goat out into the wilderness to die. Really? Really? I don't want to be a goat.

Nope. I don't want everybody's sins. I don't want everybody's problems. I don't want everybody's hang-ups. I don't want it all shoved on me. I don't want to be counted as it says in here among the cursed, the devil.

I don't want to be the ones on the left, he says, will go to punishment. I don't want to be a goat. That last verse, it talks about eternal punishment.

People ask me, so are the people who don't go to eternal life going to be punished eternally? This is the verse most people use. It actually says a punishment that lasts for an eon, which is a long age, but it's not necessarily eternally.

I hope not. I don't want anybody. I don't want anybody to suffer like that. I don't want anybody to be a goat. Go. Go. I don't know how good of a sheep I am.

[ 49 : 58 ] I just feel like I don't have time. I'm afraid that people are always trying to get in my pocket, get my stuff. I'm afraid that if I get too near broken people, I might break myself.

And knowing me, I'll say or do the wrong thing because I'm good at that, even though I don't want to do that. In the 23rd Psalm, there's a verse in there that says, God's rod and his staff, they comfort us.

The whole Psalm is about God treating us like sheep and goats. His rod and his staff, his staff is that long hook thing, which is meant to pull the sheep where they need to go, and his rod is a club, which is meant to protect the sheep, but once in a while, they'll give them a little whack when they get out of line.

Sometimes we need God to give us a little whack. He pulls on us and we don't pay attention. We don't see that Salvation Army pot. We don't see that lady in the wheelchair.

We don't see the person who's hurting and struggling and weeping and needs us. I don't want to be a messed up sheep that doesn't get it right.

[ 51 : 30 ] Mary, Mary, Mary, sang that beautiful song. My soul glorifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he's been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on, all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me. Holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds in his arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He's brought down rulers from their thrones, but has lifted up the humble.

He's filled the hungry with good things, but sent the rich away empty. Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that he'd heal the sick, that he'd cause the blind to be able to see, that he'd be God himself? Well, I think she knew that.

[ 52 : 39 ] I just thought there was a line missing from that song. Once upon a time, there was a king. The king wondered what it was like for his people.

He was curious how they talked about him, how they lived, what their life was like, and so he disguised himself as one of them. He went to live and be born in a stable. He grew up in a carpenter's house, regular home where everybody else lives.

Did common things like everyone else does. One day, he revealed to people that he was the king. He healed the sick.

He raised the dead. He taught them the lessons of love. Mary, did you know that one day you would watch your son die on a cross like a common criminal in agony and pain?

Did you know that, Mary? What would you have done if you knew that was going to happen? Thank God.

[ 53 : 55 ] He's God. He took the sins like a goat for us, but he raised from the dead like a king and broke the power of our failure.

So we have a choice. We can be people who let God change us from goats to sheep or we can stay stuck.

King Solomon once said in the book of Proverbs, one person gives freely yet gains even more. Another withholds unduly but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper.

Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. If you give your life to God, he will give it to you. If you share your life for God, God will give you a life abundantly.

If you open up your heart to see what God wants you to do and what God wants you to be, God will make you blessed.

[ 55 : 07 ] from now and forever and forever. long-run left and forever.

and if you enjoyed tulle enough and forever. You're loving22 You're the love of me Oh, in the eyes Open the eyes of my heart, Lord Open the eyes of my heart I want to see you I want to see you Open the eyes of my heart, Lord Open the eyes of my heart I want to see you I want to see you To see you high and lifted up

Shining in the light of your glory Pour out your power and love As we sing holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy I want to see you And we cry holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy Holy, holy, holy I want to see you

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord Open the eyes of my heart I want to see you I want to see you In the streets of every village Every city soaring town And people live in darkness Every minute, every hour In the cry of desperation From a million broken hearts With a need so great Where do we even start?

Let it start with me Open the eyes of my heart Give all the eyes of your compassion Free my mind from all this passion Here's my ears of my center And I want to see you Who I need to follow after you Will it change the world And let it start with me You have given us the orders There's a place for everyone I don't want to miss my mission In the plans that you've begun You have promised to go with me To the edges of it all And reach everything that keeps me From your call

[ 59 : 32 ] Let it start with me Open up my eyes Fill my heart with your compassion Free my mind from all this passion Here's my ears of my center And I'm free Who I need to follow after you Oh change the world And let it start with me Take my life All that I have for my own Everything I am is yours for all Let it start with me Open up my eyes Free my mind from all this passion Free my mind from all this passion Here's my hands And I'm free

Who I need to follow after you Oh change the world And let it start with me Open up my eyes Fill my heart with your compassion Fill my heart with your compassion Free my mind from all this passion Use my hands Set the devil's free Open up my feet to follow after you Oh change the world And let it start with me Oh change the world Open up my feet to follow after you Please be seated You know Every time I try to do the right thing

And I do It seems like I mess up Anybody else feel that way? I set out to do the right thing I really do And then somehow It goes wrong I think that's what we're all like And here's the good news The God of the universe came here To figure out exactly what we were like He experienced it He knows what it is And that's why he said to us All you gotta do is say Look This is what I did wrong And trust me I'll forget about it I'll forget it So let's go ahead and do that Shall we?

Dear God in heaven Dear God in heaven I have sinned I've done things wrong And I've neglected to do things right I'm sorry Lord Forgive me You know my heart I want to be a sheep Listen now Lord To the prayers of my heart What I need to share with you Dear God Pour out your Holy Spirit Around all of us gathered here Send your spirit of forgiveness Break the bonds of pain And hurt The guilt and suffering

We've been carrying around Lord Forgive us And set us free To live As your children  
Bringing your love Into this world For it's in Jesus name We pray Amen Jesus said If we  
confess With our hearts And with our mouth And believe with our hearts We will be  
forgiven That means today All the brokenness All the pain All the things of your past That  
are bad or wrong You can put that And leave it there And don't dig it up anymore And live  
into the promise Of what God wants you to be Living Sharing his love What he wants this  
world to be Through you In the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven In the name of  
Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven Glory to God Amen Come now

[ 64 : 30 ] Long extended Jesus Born to set Thy people free From our fears And sins Release us Let  
us find Our rest in thee Israel strength And consolation For God of all The earth And the  
world Dear desire Of every nation Joy of every longing heart Lord For thy people For thy  
people To deliver Lord Lord A child And yet A king Born To reign in us

Forever Now thy gracious kingdom bring Thy gracious kingdom bring Thy Thy own eternal  
spirit Rule in all the hearts alone By thine all-sufficient merit By thine all-sufficient merit By  
thine all-sufficient merit Praise us Praise us to thy glorious throne The table of the Lord is  
set for all of you Whether you feel worthy or not Whether you feel worthy or not God  
makes you worthy Whether you're a member of this church or you just walked in the door  
This is God's table He issues the invitation you're all welcome to come and to join us this  
morning The Lord be with you With us with you With us with you

Lift up your hearts With us with the Lord Let us give thanks to the Lord our God It is right  
to give our thanks and praise It is right Always and everywhere to give thanks to God In  
the midst of joy and celebrations In the midst of struggle and difficulty We thank God For  
He is the giver of all blessing and all good things in life And so with all the people on earth  
and all the angels in heaven We praise His name and join their unending hymn in saying  
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of power and might Heaven and earth are full of your glory  
Hosanna in the highest Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the  
highest Holy are you Blessed is your Son, Jesus Christ Born in His stable Raised in a life  
much like ours He came to the world to heal To teach

To share the glory of His kingdom On earth As it is in heaven And yet The people didn't  
want to hear Him So they broke Him They beat Him They abused Him They hung Him on  
a cross to die But He had victory over that death And we share in that victory And we  
share in His stable Even before His death On the night in which He was betrayed He  
issued the promise To His disciples He took the bread He gave thanks to God And He  
broke the bread He gave it to His disciples And He said, take and eat This is my body  
Which is broken for you For the forgiveness of sin Eat of this Remembering me  
Remembering me When the supper was over

He took the cup He gave thanks to God And He gave it to His disciples And He said, drink  
from this All of you This is my blood of the new covenant It's poured out for you And for  
many For the forgiveness of sin Drink of this Remembering me And so in remembrance of  
all these mighty acts We offer ourselves In praise and thanksgiving As a holy and living  
sacrifice In union with Christ offering for us As we proclaim the mystery faith Christ has  
died Christ has risen Christ will come again Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, Lord Pour  
your Spirit into our very lives And living Help us to be the body of Christ in this world Help  
us to be the people of love and grace and charity Help us to remember the one who can  
make something out of nothing To trust in you

[ 69 : 37 ] For this life and the one to come Bless us, Lord It be a blessing As we offer these prayers  
in the name of the Father And the Son And the Holy Spirit Amen And now as Jesus taught  
us to pray Let us join together in saying Our Father Who art in heaven Hallowed be thy  
name Thy kingdom come Thy will be done On earth as it is in heaven Give us this day our  
daily bread And forgive us our trespasses As we forgive those who trespass against us  
And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil For thine is the kingdom And the  
power And the glory forever and ever Amen For those who are assisting with communion  
Come Lord at this time, please Amen God Me■■■

Amen Amen Amen Amen And now come and join us at the table at the rail for prayers for healing and anointing, to light a candle.

Come and join us with the Lord. Amen.

Now if you're able, I'm going to invite you to stand as we're going to sing together Joy to the World.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

[ 73 : 12 ] Let us receive the gift. Let every heart with them improve.

And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and nature sing. And the helping them and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the sacred remains. Let all their songs employ.

The fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains. Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat the sounding joy.

Repeat the sounding joy. May lose the world with two of the ways.

[ 74 : 17 ] And makes the nations grow. May God fill your hearts with his spirit.

May God fill your hearts in such a way that they overflow into the world around you.

That you can't help it. But to go out and help all those that God puts in your way. May the Lord bless you. May the Lord open up your eyes. And may the Lord grant you his peace this day and into eternity.

May the Lord bless you May the Lord bless you.

Amen.