

Sometimes people can be mean to us Have you ever had anyone be mean to you? Yeah And you know what? Think about somebody that you really, really, really, really love a lot Okay?

And think about that as we do this Oh, ouch, ouch, ouch You know, people have hurt us But then sometimes, we've hurt others And when we do that We crumple them up and it makes them feel like they're just a piece of garbage Garbage Is that good?

No, that's not right at all So what can we do? What do you think we could do to fix that? Yeah You should say sorry, right?

Yeah Yeah, you should say sorry, and you try and make up for what you're doing So every time we say sorry, and you try and make up for what we're doing We straighten out that paper And we just keep trying to get those wrinkles out You know, and each time we do anything loving for someone else It's as if we're stretching out that paper and trying to get those wrinkles out So I have a crumpled up piece of paper Because I've sometimes been mean to people too But you know what I think I'm going to do?

[6 : 23] I'm going to take this crumpled up piece of paper And I'm going to draw a picture on it And I'm going to give it to somebody that I love And I'm going to say, I love you And I'm sorry if I ever did anything to hurt you Think about what you could do for others too Because God loves each of us and He wants us to do that for Him, right?

So what are you all thankful for this morning? Raise your hand if you want to share My guinea pig Mom and Dad Family and friends Family Mom and Dad My family Anyone else?

Whoops, right here My dad Very nice, okay Let's hold our hands and let's pray Oh, that's right Miss Erin, our Girl Scout is going to do it Dear Lord our God, who loves each and every one of us more than we can ever imagine Thank you for friends and family who love us very much Also for teaching the difference between right and wrong Please continue to bless us and be kind to one another Please help to love each and every To love others as you love us In Jesus' name we pray, Amen Amen, and you guys can all go off to church school if you'd like Go on off to church school Thank you, Mary Thank you, Mary Thank you, Mary Thank you, Mary So, we have a thankful moment by Miss Jade this morning Good morning

Good morning I am Jade King So, I have been a Girl Scout for 12 years And in that amount of time, I have sold hundreds of cookies Challenged other Girl Scouts in a series of events, Skills and Chills Sing along with thousands of other Girl Scouts in Washington, D.C.

Learned leadership in many different ways Learned independence through overnight camp And most importantly, had fun in more ways than I can count I also learned that the importance of setting goals and the wonder of achieving them We were able to go to New York City and see Wicked on Broadway Our troop has been meeting at this church in the art room for nine years From that room, ideas of community service, trips, getting patches have arose and made into reality My troop leader was a source of inspiration for most of these ideas She is an amazing leader, and I am fortunate enough to call her my mother The other great Girl Scout in my life is my dad Yes, that's right, you heard me, my dad Our troop didn't have enough adult drivers to go to the Harlem Globetrotters game So in order for that, my dad had to be able to drive some of the girls He had to register himself as a Girl Scout Sorry Where am I?

[9 : 29]

He bailed us out of a lot of situations, and is very proud to be able to do so And be a member of Girl Scouts As a culmination of my Girl Scout career, me and my troop are climbing to the top of White Face Mountain in Lake Placid in April This represents reaching the pinnacle of all our goals and all our years together I am so thankful that I have been able to be a part of this organization for so long I have seen how the rules have changed, how getting a badge has become a much more involved process, called Journeys We have made dinner for the 30-hour famine to learn our, so what, bad, journey And we made kindness fortune cookies to earn our Girtopia journey I volunteered at Camp Winnie Meadows for three summers I was able to assist the counselors and lead the girls in songs and games It was fun for me, and an honor to make the little girls' summers fantastic I am grateful to our church for giving us a Girl Scout home And giving us a welcome place to learn and grow I would now like to recognize all the Girl Scouts past and present If you are a Girl Scout or have ever been a Girl Scout, please stand up That blood pumping Thank you Thank you so much for being a part of this organization

And helping girls to discover, connect, and take action Thank you Thank you Thank you Jade, what a blessing, what a blessing to have our Girl Scouts with us And in a moment we are going to invite Annabelle to play for our offering And you are going to find in your bulletin, an envelope This is for the United Methodist Church's One Great Hour of Sharing UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, provides water, we supply food, we give all kinds of relief from all kinds of disasters UMCOR is often the first group of people on the scene, able to prepare, to provide what people are in need of UMCOR is the group that is ready now And that's why we are taking up an offering for them with all of the other United Methodist Churches throughout the world We are taking up this offering so that they can be ready They are not a group, UMCOR is not a group that waits until a disaster happens

And then starts gathering and organizing stuff UMCOR is ready now So when something happens, they can be the first folks on the scene Always coming and bringing and sharing the love of God So as God has provided us this wonderful place to bring our Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and all kinds of other groups To share God's love and to learn more about how to be the kinds of people God wants us to be Let us consider in our hearts how we can reach out beyond these walls And help those people in our world, our wider world who are needing help too Give as God has called you to give, as an act of worship to Him Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day And for the honor and privilege of being able to gather together and worship your name together Father, we ask that you would bless this offering Give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom And teach us, Lord, to use all of the gifts that you have given us

Only for your glory In Jesus' name we pray, Amen Please be seated We have such a joy of sharing with our Girl Scouts this morning To gather together and worship What a blessing that that is And I know you have many joys in your hearts too As you come here to rejoice in the Lord And all that God has done in your life We do have a couple of concerns to bring before the Lord as well We have some folks in the hospital June Phillips is recovering from surgery Let's see Jan Faye took a fall And has broken her leg and is in need of surgery So we're going to be checking on her this week And finding out what's going on And Elizabeth Fritz, who is Sam and Diana Fritz's daughter Is in the hospital with influenza We need to keep her lifted up as well Paula Betcher, who is our church custodian Has been quite ill for the past week

She's home and getting better But she could use our prayers as well And Kelly Putney And her family We want to keep those folks in our prayers As her Aunt Molly has died And Elmer Krupp and his family as well Elmer's sister Marion died this week And so we want to keep all of these folks in our prayers And of course all of the people who are in your hearts Whose names just haven't been mentioned this morning Let's take all of these things to the Lord Who hears and answers our prayers Gracious Heavenly Father How good it is to be in your presence You are the one who has made us And who sustains everything in this world You pour out good things into the lives of your people We are so grateful Lord That we can come before you We are grateful that you rejoice where we rejoice And that you mourn the Lord And that you mourn the Lord And are sad when we are in mourning and sadness Lord God we do lift up all of these folks who are in need of healing of all kinds And that you are in need of healing of all kinds These folks who were mentioned and other people in our hearts that we know of

[14 : 47] And that you are in need of healing of all kinds We pray that you will heal them from the top of our heads We pray that you will heal them from the top of our heads And that you are among people that the ho■ is Sandra May God bless you And that you are in need of healing of all kinds We pray that you are in need of healing of all kinds Lord God we do lift up all of these folks who are in need of healing of all kinds God, we do lift up all of these folks who are in need of healing of all kinds, these folks who were mentioned and other people in our hearts that we know of.

We pray that you will heal them from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet, in their spirits, their souls, and their bodies, Lord, wherever it is that they are in need.

Father, we pray for those who are grieving the loss of loved ones and other losses of all kinds. There are so many kinds of loss in this broken world.

We pray for the comfort of the presence of your Holy Spirit to be in our lives and in the lives of those people who are in need of it. Lord God, we pray that you continue to draw people, those who are already in covenant with you, who know who you are and rejoice in their salvation in Jesus Christ.

We pray that we each draw closer. For those, Lord God, who do not know you, we pray that you continue to draw them to tug at their hearts, to allow them to enter into situations where they will be confronted with your grace and your mercy and your great love.

[16 : 35] And pray that they would be saved. Lord God, we pray for all that is going on in our world, all of the terrible things that are happening, the violence that people do to one another.

You have created us to be people of love. You created us to love one another and to love you as you love us.

And we turn on one another. With angry thoughts and with violence and with all kinds of terrible things, we see the people of the world, the people of our nation, even the people of our very community, treating each other in ways that are just horrible.

We pray that those people who don't know you would be drawn to you and change their lives. We pray for the transforming power of the blood of Jesus Christ to come over all of us.

We pray, Lord God, that as your church, as your church, Lord, we would be the example.

[17 : 56] Change our hearts, Lord. As we hear your word spoken out, Lord God, let it wash over us, wash in us and wash through us.

Change us, transform us by the hearing of your word, Lord. And I pray in Jesus' name that you would anoint Pastor Sherry to deliver the message that you have put on her heart for us this day.

Let it be a blessing to us and a blessing to her, Lord. And let all of our worship be a blessing to you, Father. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Good morning.

Good morning. Today's scripture reading is from Romans 12, verses 9-21. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

[19 : 18] Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, it is mine to avenge, I will repay, says the Lord.

On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will keep burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

[20 : 19] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Allison. All you need is love. Bum, bum, bum, bum, bum. All you need is love.

Bum, bum, bum, bum, bum. All you need is love. Love. Love is all you need. When I first was told by Pastor Tom that this is going to be the scripture I'm preaching from, and I read it, that's what came to mind.

The first song that came to my mind, I started singing The Beatles, and as somebody who works in worship and music, I felt a little bit guilty because I figured something a little more spiritual should have come to mind. I'm angry.

We went to The Beatles. I don't know. And then I started looking at the passage, and it seemed like one of those lists of things we already know, right? We know this stuff.

I mean, it's just a list. It's kind of like, you know, dealing with children and youth. You say a lot of things that people should already know just to be safe. It's 30 degrees below zero outside.

[21 : 18] Wear a coat. There's icicles hanging all over, and I know it's tempting, but don't throw ice at people. And, you know, although I do wear a coat when it's 30 below, I have gone out into a cold world without first covering myself with the protection and warmth of prayer, and I have been frostbitten by people who have made me feel as if I had no value.

And although I don't throw ice at people, I have thrown icy words and cold actions toward others at times in my life, sometimes even to those I say I love.

I suspect you have as well. In fact, I'd like to do an experiment. If you're able, I'm going to invite you to stand if these things apply to you. So stand if you have ever, in your entire life, ever been hurt by the words or actions or inactions of anyone else.

Has anyone ever been rude to you, put you down, been thoughtless, hurtful, mean, nasty, or responded to you in anger? Have you ever felt lonely, excluded, or unworthy? Yep.

So then the next question, sit down only if this applies to you. Have you never, in your entire life, never, ever hurt anyone else by your words or action or inaction?

[22 : 37] Have you never been rude, never put anyone down, never talked badly about someone, never been thoughtless, hurtful, mean, nasty, or responded to anyone in anger? You've never ignored anyone who was alone and never excluded anyone?

Yep. Welcome to our messed up, broken, sinful, and very cold world. Please be seated. Yeah, we're all guilty. So, you know, although we all know what we're supposed to be doing, we know we're supposed to be loving toward others, it's really, really, really hard to do because it applies to people and we're all broken, sinful people.

Well, this particular passage by the Apostle Paul was written to a church that's based in Rome and this group of Christians was made up of Jews.

Now, the Jews knew the Old Testament. They probably could have recited the entire thing. They knew all the scripture and full, chock full of scripture is tons and tons and tons of stuff about love.

We know we're supposed to be loving. They knew this scripture inside and out. But, you know, knowing something and doing something are two totally different things. Which is harder?

[23 : 48] Knowing something or loving somebody? And knowing scripture and having it memorized doesn't do anything unless you have the spiritual maturity to actually apply it. Knowledge huffs us up.

Love builds us up. But in this Roman church with all these Jews who had just converted to Christianity were also these Gentiles and they're all moving in and they're trying to figure out how does this whole thing work and who's better than who and how's this going to work?

So in the middle of dealing with this church Paul feels the need to write bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. Do not repay evil for evil.

If it is possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone. In fact, Paul even throws in a little jab at the Jews by putting in Proverbs 25 about feeding your enemy if they're hungry.

Now, that would have been like hello, you know this stuff. What are you doing? An enemy in this instance is not like a national enemy. At that time Israel didn't have a national identity.

[24 : 48] He's talking about an enemy the enemy among us. It's the one that we're an adversary with. It's somebody that we're hostile with. It could be somebody that we run into on the road in the store.

It could be somebody that we work with. It could be somebody in the church. It could be somebody in our home. You know when tensions get high and it starts coming and now you're my enemy.

for this moment. And we've got to figure out each and every time even with the people we love how we respond with that. Well, what happens if we actually do this thing and we bless instead of persecute and we bless instead of curse and we don't repay evil for evil.

Check out this video to find out what happens when we actually use love instead. We do not hear So what's the coming I don't see anything off.

What about the drama with it? To how many years ■■■■? Help me. Come do it.

[26 : 24] Come on, come on. Come on. Come on. Come on.

Come on.

Come on. Come on. Amen.

Amen. The act of compassion and kindness makes a great deal of difference in someone's life, but I'm going to look at it a little deeper.

That man, when the first instant came up and that little boy was being attacked, he didn't have to go help. wasn't any of his business.

[28 : 53] He could have absolutely stood by and just allowed that to happen. That's their thing. In fact, when that man came up and asked for food, he could have absolutely said, no, I'm sorry.

I'm trying to run a business here. You're bad for business. I'm trying to run a business. You go get a job. I don't have to help you. And he had every right to do that. That woman in the beginning that was nasty to the little boy had every single right to be angry.

That boy was stealing, stealing, taking from her, and she's working hard, and he's stealing from her, and even the Bible says that stealing is wrong. I have every right to be angry.

And we often have every right to be angry. A lot of the time we have rights to be angry, but you know what? Every time we have a right to be angry, never, ever, ever means we have a right or any excuse to act on that.

And yet we do. A couple of months ago, well, actually, it was right before Christmas, I was going to, doing all the Christmas stuff, you know, all these errands, and I'm running around to get the dog at the groomers, and we're running all these errands, and going Christmas shopping, all over the place, right?

[30 : 06] And I drop Joshua at the hall, and I go to pick up the dog at the groomer, and I realize my purse is not with me. Now, this is, normally a woman at this point would flip, okay, purse not with you, very, very, very bad, but this was the Christmas purse.

This is the purse, the big purse. It has not only all your identity, and all your credit cards, and all your money, but you also have gift cards, and of course I've been shopping, so all those little gifts, I got shoved in there too.

It's my big purse. And I go through, oh my gosh, where would it be? And I realize, okay, the last place I was was Panera Bread. So I'm running across the parking lot, tears in my eyes, oh, where's my purse?

And I get to Panera Bread, and there's this big, long line, almost out the door. And so I kind of scooch my eye up to the front, and I'm trying to stand there as patiently as I can, as they're finishing up the one person's food.

And I looked at the manager, and said, yeah, my purse. Now, as I'm coming in, and I'm scooting up to the front to try and see if they have my purse, past all these people, oh, the fury.

[31 : 08] The people who are just seething in anger that I would ever, ever, ever cut in front of them. And they were just sitting there, and they're glaring at me, and they're talking. I can't believe it.

I can't believe it. And then when I got my purse, they turned, some of them, and not all of them, actually were like, oh, okay, she's just getting her purse. All right. So then, a little while later, I was at Regnance on Saturday morning, which I do every Saturday.

I go and get communion elements, right? I have a standing order. They know me. Well, it's before Christmas. So it's the zoo. People everywhere. And they're all in line. And there's actually a line. There's never been a line before. And there's a line.

So I'm waiting in line. There's people in front of me. There's people in line. Finally, it's my turn in line. And this woman, from over there, goes, looks right at me. Goes right in front. And the whole time I sit there, you know, you're trying to be the peaceful presence.

And meantime, the guy next to me is fuming. Oh, he was ready to just go off it. And he's trying to get me to do it too. He's like, can you believe her? I'm on a jerk.

[32 : 10] Oh. And he's just like, get out of here. Get out of here. And the whole time I'm thinking, you know, really? First of all, to go off on something at all is wrong.

But can you imagine if I went off on somebody about something like this? Oh, you did this. And who are you? Oh, I'm the pastor. What are you doing here?

I'm picking up elements for holy communion. It wouldn't be good. But then the question is, who are you? Who are you? You're a child of God.

You belong to a community of faith. What are you doing? Spreading God's love. Hopefully. You know, I think if we're all born again in Christ, we're able to be loving.

And I believe that all of us want to be loving. I don't believe anyone intentionally sets out in the day saying, boy, I can't wait to be nasty to someone today. I can't wait. I'm going to put down that one.

[33 : 07] I'm going to be hurtful to that one. I'm going to totally ignore that one. It's going to be great. I don't think so. I think we all really have a strong intention to do the right thing and to be loving to one another.

And we're supposed to be. It's the gospel message. Reaching out to one another in love. We are the body of Christ. And there's a couple in the Bible that actually did that. They did it extremely well.

Their names were Priscilla and Aquila. And they were a married couple in the Bible. and they would sew together tents for a living. So they built tents. And they were stationed in Corinth.

And while they were there, they actually established the Church of Corinth. And when they were trying to work on building the Church of Corinth, the Apostle Paul, who was also a tent maker, came and they invited him to stay with them.

And he stayed with them a year and a half. Talk about hospitality. And when they were having the Church of Corinth settled, they were actually having all their church meetings within their house.

[34 : 10] And then, after that church was all settled, they decided that they would go off to Ephesus and establish the church there. And so, they just continued having house meetings in their house at all the church meetings.

So how do you build a tent? You take a piece of fabric and another piece of fabric and you take thread, right?

There's a big thing missing there. The thing is, that sharp, pointy thing called a needle. See, we can try and put them together, but unless we take that needle and we pierce that fabric and we pierce it again so that we can tie them together, it won't stay.

And so it is with love. Love. The first verse in this passage, verse 9, says that love must be sincere. And the form of love used there is agape.

It's sacrificial love. And the piercing of the fabric is like the sacrifice that each and every one of us has to make if we're going to be in relationship with one another.

[35 : 18] It could be a sacrifice of time or money, but most often that sacrifice is the expectation of perfection in someone else.

No one's perfect, especially not me. And the only way to be in relationship with someone is if we're open with compassion, understanding, and most importantly, forgiveness.

1 John 3.16 says, this is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Sacrifice. It's what Jesus did for us. It moves me every time in the service. The biggest moment for me is when, after the prayer of confession, we hear the good news.

Christ died. Died for us while we were still sinners. And this proves God's love for you and for me.

[36 : 19] He didn't wait until we were perfect. In my instance, he'd still be waiting. But instead, he died and made that sacrifice for us. John 13.34-35 says, as I have loved you, so you must, must love one another.

Jesus loved us with a sacrificial love. And we're called to do the same. So in essence, we're all tent makers. We're sowing a life. We're sowing a home. We're sowing a church community.

We are creating a place of protection for people to be gathered in with us. A safe place. A godly place. So the question is, who's invited in?

And how are they treated when they get there? I remember when I first came to this church, and I think it was about 1990, so a long time ago, and this church wasn't actually here.

It was that building over there, and that upper part where our offices are, that was actually the sanctuary. And if you ever go into Pastor Tom's office, that one section over there where he has his table, that was the choir loft.

[37 : 25] And I had been out of the church for a long time. That's another sermon someday. And I was trying to get back into it, and you know, I enjoyed Pastor Tom's sermons and all, but I really didn't understand this whole church thing.

I had no clue how the whole thing worked. And I'm listening to the choir, and I just felt God saying, you know, you really need to do that. And I didn't know if I was allowed. I didn't know what the rules were. And so I remember being terrified as I went to the rehearsal and standing there, they're up in the front, and I'm standing in the back, and I'm like, you know, I heard you have a rehearsal.

Am I allowed to sing with you? There was this one woman, her name was Carol, Carol Spencer. And if any of you know Beverly Spencer, it's her daughter.

And she was the most bubbling, beautiful gift of God's love to me. And she was like, yes, of course, welcome.

I mean, she was like, ah! And it was a wonderful feeling. And, you know, up until that point, although, you know, you wanted to be connected to God, I really had no clue about being part of a church community, and I never had a church family.

[38 : 39] But being part of that choir, we had a family. It was so cool. And in that family of choir people, which means we're doing music, we had this one woman who couldn't sing at all.

And she would tell you she couldn't sing at all because she was deaf, mostly deaf, and she was very tone deaf, too. But her name was Shirley, and she was a great lady, and she was so filled with God, and she just wanted to sing to God.

And, and of course, she joined us because Carol's there saying, yes, of course, come join us. And we had beautiful music.

Did it sound great? Sometimes. But you know what? I really firmly believe that God would rather hear many singers who can't sing with a lick, but they're singing with God's glory and love than anyone who's singing with a perfectionist and don't have love in them.

And that taught me so much about the sincerity of what we're doing here. And throughout that whole thing, that whole thing with being part of the choir, it really, really changed me.

[39 : 59] that one person being welcoming to me and being welcoming to others completely changed me. And I don't think she even has a clue. It's just part of her nature.

But how's your personal Tutt doing? Are you welcoming and loving? Are you Carol to someone? Are we stitching together here a community that embraces everyone and is devoted to one another and in love?

A place where there's mourning with people who mourn and even harder rejoicing with those who are rejoicing? It's hard. By our very nature, we're sinful and selfish and we're looking out for numer uno.

So what stitches does it take to make this happen? Well, as we try to stitch together honoring one another, we sacrifice our pride. And as we stitch together our devotion to one another, we sacrifice our time.

And as we stitch together our giving to one another, we sacrifice our wealth. And as we stitch together our love for one another, we sacrifice our judgment, our condemnation, and our rights.

[41 : 06] Our rights. Verse 18 says, if it is possible, as far as it depends on you and me, live at peace with everyone.

So when we get into this errrr moment with someone, it's up to us. And before we start casting stones, we need to start checking out the plank in our own eye.

It's easy to say, they, they, they, they, they, they. What are we doing? How are we contributing this? Take some time. If you have to step aside, take some time out.

You know, just like you get it. Time out. And pray. Because right at that time, you're set with a challenge. And you can make an impact, and you will make an impact, positive or negative, by whatever you say and whatever you do.

So, the problem is when you pray. Because I don't, I'm sure many of us have had that prayer of, oh God, please show them that they're horrible. Please make it so that they are convicted from what they're doing.

[42 : 09] And instead, how do we turn that around? And we say, we're going to instead send blessings and say, God, how can I be a blessing to this person because I'm struggling? Show me what it is in me that needs to change so that I can be in a relationship with this person.

How do I make this into what you called it to be? See, God has sent into each and every one of our lives specific people for a specific reason. And we have to figure out what that is.

And it could be that these people are in our lives because we're supposed to not only be sharing our love for them, but we're also supposed to be growing in our spiritual maturity. And maybe we're supposed to be learning how to be patient.

Maybe we're supposed to be learning how to be humble. Maybe we're supposed to be able to learn how to have empathy or compassion or understanding. Whatever it is, God is giving us people in our lives that we're going to figure out how to wrestle with and how to deal with and figure it out so that we can world it up together.

But it's up to us with God to fix our part as far as it depends on us. Priscilla and Aquila were working on their church and after a while this young preacher came into town.

[43 : 23] His name was Apollos and it says he was fervent in the scriptures. And so he came in and he's preaching and they're listening and everyone, woo! But they found out as he's preaching that he really didn't have the whole story right.

So if you can imagine this preacher and he doesn't really understand the resurrection, that's kind of a big thing in Christianity and he didn't really understand it. Now what happens in today's world? Today's world, we go off on them to do something wrong!

We're going to be writing nasty Facebook messages and we're going to tweet out something evil and we're going to be writing a blog. You know, let me just tell you, if Satan puts a vile thought in your head, don't write it.

And it doesn't need to be said, it's one of those, I thought it was obvious, but it's clearly not because it's all over the place, right? But instead, what Priscilla and Aquila did was what we're supposed to do.

You know, somebody's doing something, they took him aside, quietly, away from everyone else, patiently, kindly, and explained it to them. Now here's the other part of it.

[44 : 30] that Apollos was a good godly man and so he received correction willingly. Ouch! Ouch!
Are we open to that give and take? It's really, really hard. But we're all called to do it. Now we have a great church here.

Honestly, I am so proud to be a part of this church. And verse 13 says, share with the Lord's people who are in need. And we totally do that. We give globally with Operation Christmas Child, World Vision, Nicaragua, UMCOR, etc.

We do things nationally with the Connectional Ministries and sending youth on mission trips and we serve meals in Buffalo and Niagara Falls and all over. I mean, we do tons of stuff here.

It's amazing what an incredible gift you all are. But in some ways, those types of giving and loving, though necessary, wonderful, and very much appreciated, those are the easy things.

[45 : 31] What's difficult is the giving and loving that needs to happen on a relational level. But just because it's difficult doesn't mean we shouldn't be striving to do it.

It's not enough to know we should be loving. It's supposed to be done. And so how do we do it? I mean, Matthew chapter 5, verse 46 and 47, Jesus said, if you love those who love you, what reward will you get?

Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? We get so busy with our lives that we forget to reach out to others.

We just don't see it, which is why it's so powerful, important, that we take the youth away to do mission trips because they take the time and they focus on it and it's a priority.

Sometimes we just don't notice it because we're just not taking the time. We're just so busy. We don't take the time to be loving and we don't notice when people are hurting or people are in need.

[46 : 33] The needs may be visible. This is one of the many things they do these studies about whether or not anyone's going to help. You know, they may be needing food or shelter or clothing or a shoulder to cry on, but studies have shown that people are so busy they will walk right on by someone who is blatantly in need.

And that young boy, it was five degrees outside, no coat, shivering, asking for help. It took hours of people walking by before anyone even stopped to give them a coat.

I always find that kind of odd. I mean, I really just, it's not in my nature to just walk on by somebody who's hurting, but it happens. It's our world.

We're broken. Remember, everybody was standing up. The thing is, the reason is everybody has to take the time out. And with every time we take the time out, we're sacrificing something. A few weeks ago, we're on the way, Joshua and I are on the way here for church on a Wednesday night, and so we're trying to get here for youth, and we're hurrying and everything, as usual, I'm running late.

And roads were horrible, as usual, for months. And as we're going down Campbell Boulevard, we see that there's a car right by the town hall there, and it's fully in a ditch like this, and it's packed with snow all around it.

[47 : 46] And we're like, oh my goodness, and there's somebody in that car. So we go up to Broward's, and we park there, and Josh and I go running over to see if the woman's okay. It was an old woman stuck in a ditch. She couldn't get out. So of course, Josh and I get out.

We're trying to haul it out, and thankfully, some big, strong guys came and helped us because I was clearly the weak link in this thing. We're trying to haul it out, and finally we did get the woman out, and everything was well, helping someone in need.

But you know what? I was late, getting here for youth. I was cold. I was wet. Was it worth it? Yep. Yep.

But there's always a sacrifice, always. You know, there's people around us who are in need, and sometimes it is visible, but sometimes it's not even visible. God has brought people to us who are lonely, people who need a place to belong, people who are looking for a community, looking for a place to be loved and accepted.

Do you think that the church should reach out to them? Do you think that the church should reach out to them? Let me hear that again. Do you think that the church should reach out to them? Yes.

[48 : 50] Of course. Of course. It's one of those, of course the church should look out for them. Of course we should reach out. Of course. Right? But then who is the church? Hmm. Let me bring out my big old mirror, and I'm going to look in the mirror and say, oh, I'm the church.

Hmm. You are the church. We are the church together. Yeah. So it's not just, you know, the people that work here because the church is not that at all.

It's all of us together as a community of people that God has purposely placed in our lives so that we can be loving to one another.

So this is harder for some than others. You know? I honestly, though I'm standing up here, which is terrifying, I'm an introvert.

Going up and talking to people is really scary for me. It doesn't come easily to me at all. I'm crazy shy. I try hard. It's not easy for me at all.

[49 : 55] My husband, on the other hand, crazy friendly. He can go up and talk to anybody. He does. Everybody knows him. It's so easy for him. But for those of us who are introverts and really, really struggle with coming up and talking to people because we're shy, we know it's important.

We want to be in relationship with other people. We long for that and so we sit and sacrifice that so that we can have that. And it's hard. Love, agape love, must be sincere.

And if you really filled with God's love, you have a sincere desire to be careful to other people. To be someone who's going to reach out and make an impact in someone's life, just like Jesus was sacrificing for us.

You know, one of the things that visitors and newcomers don't like when they come to church in some, in fact, some little blog, of course, you know, the whole blogging thing, blog about how much they hate it, hate this, the part of worship service, is the sharing of the peace.

Can't stand it. And the reason they state is because they can sense that we're not really sincere and genuine in greeting. Are we?

[51 : 14] We all kind of have to check ourselves. Are we really sincerely turning to the people around us and saying, hey, Annabelle, hi, really good to see you. How are you doing? Or are we saying, peace be with you, peace be with you, peace be with you.

Okay, can we move on with this already? I've been, I've had that experience. And people can sense that. So we need to check ourselves.

Are we really doing with the peace of the spirit what the pole point is or not? It's wonderful that you guys have great friends here. In fact, I see them.

I see the pockets of friends around here. But you know, surrounded by these pockets of friends are people who aren't in your pocket. And the crazy thing is, you guys, for the most part, sit in the same spot every single week.

I mean, you kind of all of us have assigned seats. From behind, I know who you are. So it's really kind of fun. You know, you can go over to Star Point to see a play and you're always like down right. It's fun.

[52 : 11] But I want you, here's a challenge for you. Everybody look to your right. Now everybody look to your left. Look to pews behind you or chairs behind you and two up in front of you.

Okay. Do you know everybody? Do you know everybody's name? Why not? Why not?

If that person wasn't here next week, would you contact them to find out if they're okay? Ooh. Well, that might take some time.

Ouch. Do we really care enough to do this? It's hard. It's a sacrifice. You know. But that's what we're called to do, isn't it?

We're actually starting a program that on the surface it sounds like the most insincere thing on the planet. Okay. But it's called, well, Pastor Jean has called it Friendlies.

[53 : 14] And the thing is that we need people to be purposefully friendly. Because although it's really great that you're sharing with one another and you're caring for one another within your pocket, we need people that are going to go outside of that.

And so we're thinking, okay, so what if we have like every month or month and a half or so, you're signed up and it's my day to be friendly. Which, again, on the surface sounds really, really, really insincere.

right? My day to be friendly, okay. Okay, gotta do that. But at the same time, if you have changed your perspective on it, it's like, no, this is a time when I am purposely going to set time aside to make sure that I reach out to other people and I may very well touch someone that may change their life today.

I may meet my very best friend today. You never know. But it's a change of perspective. Will you take time aside to say that instead of spending this much time with my friends today, I'm gonna spend this much time with my friends and I'm gonna go seek out other people that God has purposely placed in our midst?

God has given us all kinds of people to care for and we've got people of all ages here and we honestly have tons and tons of youth here which is such a great blessing and they've done studies, of course, they do studies about everything, about, you know, they're worried that all the youth are leaving their faith, they're all leaving churches, why is this?

[54 : 41] And they found that the biggest reason is because they don't have it, their church has not become a home and the way to change that they have found is to do a one in five ratio and we'd say, oh, for one adult for every five youth, flip-flop that.

Five adults investing in every single youth here. five adults that give a rip. Five adults that would know, I know your name.

I know your name. I know your name. And I know that you play, I know, I know you play the violin now, Anna, you play beautifully. You know, and how do we, do we have people in our church because it is our church family so it's not just the parents' responsibility, do we have people in our church that are willing to reach out to the youth, reach out to the children, and reach out to the adults because I assume that the five in one ratio is not only for youth but it's for the children and for the adults too.

But we take it for granted. We take it for granted that everybody's going to be here, right? We have all these people around us. God gives us people around us and he knows our sinful nature and so verse 11 says never be lacking in zeal but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord.

In other words, don't become complacent. We take our relationships for granted so God's never be lacking in zeal and the moment we stop reaching out to those around us in love is the moment we in essence have Satan tanning us a big old seam ripper.

[56 : 08] When I sew, that's the main thing I use is a seam ripper because I don't sew well but a seam ripper is a sharp tool and it rips apart every single stitch.

You know, every time we ignore someone, every time we don't take the time out to help them to know that they're important to us, every time we disregard someone or treat someone harshly or reach out to them in anger or anything like that, if we just take it for granted that people are going to be with us, we've taken out a seam ripper and those pieces are going to fall apart.

So how do we do this? Thankfully, Jesus is the great physician and verse 12, I believe, holds the key. It's be joyful in hope. Always remember that God loves you.

Patient in affliction, remember that Christ is patient with you and died for you in spite of the fact you were sinning and so he is patient with you so we have to be patient with others and this is the biggest one, be faithful in prayer, being in constant communication with God for protection, guidance, and forgiveness.

It's not the, you know, before you get out of bed praying, you know, fill me, Lord, for this and then you get out of bed and everything falls apart. Constant throughout the day, checking in with God, making sure you're with him, the whole thing.

[57 : 28] 1 John 4, 8 says, whoever does not love does not know God because God is love. So how we treat other people is a reflection of how close or how far away we are from God.

It's like a pendulum and throughout the day, if we get too busy, we get too self-focused, we start swinging away and next thing you know, we're going to not only be swinging away, but we're going to be swinging away.

You got to keep yourself in check, constant, faithful, in prayer. God is love. Imagine a world where every believer, every believer has sewn together a tent of sincere love where everyone is welcome and can gather and is treated with honor and respect.

A world where every believer goes out into the world covered and warmed by a coat of prayer so that when we go out into a cold world, we encounter people that are nasty, disrespectful, and horrible to us.

It doesn't crush us and make us feel as if we have no value because our value is in knowing that God loves us. And we would be so warmed by God's love that we will respond in love.

[58 : 40] A world where every believer is so focused on treating one another with love that we would not be tempted by all those hanging icicles that are hanging everywhere and we would never throw icy glances or words or actions at each other.

If we, as the body of Christ, lived out the love that God gave to us, we would change the world. We all need to say a prayer, opening up our eyes to see the people that are around us, filling our hearts with God's compassion, giving us guidance as to how we can use our hands and feet to make an impact in this world.

I believe through God we can change this world. Let it start with each and every one of us. Amen. God does call us to be the body. For this that we were made, we are to be the body of Christ and carry that candle out wherever it is that we go.

In the United Methodist Church, everyone is welcome to come to the table where we gather together as the body. We gather together with Jesus to receive what we need from Jesus to be that candle, to be that light in the world, to carry it forth and share it and love.

Everyone is welcome at the table. You don't have to be a member of the church. Today could be the first day that you walk through the doors of any church. And if, coming here, you discover that you love God and that you earnestly repent of your sin and that you in your heart of hearts seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you're welcome to come to this table and receive.

[60 : 36] Come. God will bless you. God will give you all you need to carry your candle into the world. The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

you brought all things into being and called them good. From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

[61 : 38] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

And now, as we take this time during Lent and reflect on all that we are and all that God calls us to be, we do feel the need to repent, to have our hearts cleansed.

Let us be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant that you made with us through Christ. On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and he gave thanks to you.

He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying to him, eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And so, in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

[63 : 33] Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here. Nandi's gifts of bread and wine, God, make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen. Shall we pray together as disciples of Jesus the prayer that he taught us?

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.

[64 : 49] For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. When you came in, you should have received a little piece of fabric and if you didn't, grab one on the way out.

But if you notice this little piece of fabric, it's not going to do much of anything on its own. In fact, if it doesn't connect up with other pieces fairly soon, the fraying edges will continue to fray and you'd have just a pile of thread that means nothing.

Seek out other people with the fabric. Seek out other people to become connected to in relationship. Just know ahead of time and prepare yourself with God's love so that when the sacrifices come and they will, they have to, that you're ready to accept whatever sacrifice is needed to make sure that bond is there.

So may God fill you with his love that you may be a shining beacon of love to your family in this place of worship and may we all be so filled with God's love that we go out and change the world.

Go in his love. Amen.