

Sharing God's Heart for a Broken World

by Astor Yelanguenzian

This sermon emphasizes the call to mature in faith and step into the authority given by God to serve others. It challenges the congregation to see beyond the surface of their surroundings and recognize the hidden struggles and pain that exist in their community. The message encourages believers to actively engage in reaching out to those in need, trusting in God's power to bring healing and transformation.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:11, Matthew 10:1, John 20:21, Isaiah 61:1, Revelation 22:2

Topics: "Maturity in Faith", "Serving with Authority"

Description

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Transcript

Lord God, we come before you this morning and we ask you to come down and speak to us. When we were a child, we lived like a child. We acted like a child.

But now that we are adults, let us put childish things away. Help us to grow into the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to worship him by listening and following his words. And today, Lord, I ask that you would bless us, oh Lord, with your Holy Spirit.

Convict us and allow us to see and hear and feel things that are new. Help us to grow and move closer to you for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the world. Anoint my lips and use me, your unworthy servants, to speak to your people.

In Jesus' name I pray, amen. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

I have a set of questions for us this morning. But before I do that, I want us to extend our imaginations. Imagine a young couple who've been trying to have a child for the past two years.

Read the results of another disturbing negative test. Imagine a husband and a father of three going to work and finding out early that he has been let go because the company needed to downsize and now is driving home, pondering how he's going to communicate this to his family. Imagine a young 18-year-old girl whose spirit is crushed, emotionally devastated, because in the same week, her high school

sweetheart broke up with her.

And the college she applied for denied her acceptance. Imagine a 45-year-old mother who just got a call from the doctor's office reporting that her blood work results have come in and that she is diagnosed with stage 3 cancer. Imagine a man who's on his way to work in the morning, who gets the heartbreaking news that his father passed away late that night.

Imagine a successful lawyer who suddenly has no motivation to go to work, to leave home, or even leave his bed. Because he's overwhelmed with anxiety and depression. Imagine a young couple who recently moved into a city six months ago and are overwhelmed with loneliness.

There's no sense of friendship or community and are beginning to think maybe they shouldn't have moved after all. Imagine an elderly woman who recently took a fall, broke her hip, which has left her now immobile and homebound, not able to live outside that home, tend her garden, and is deeply saddened that no one from her family visits her. Imagine a single mother who's at the end of her rope, physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted from having to work and raise her children all by herself.

Imagine a mother and father receiving the terrifying phone call from the police that their son was recently involved in a car accident and is being rushed to the hospital. Imagine a local contractor not being able to sleep for the past four weeks because he's tied in a legal battle with a client, fearing that his business that he's worked for all these years might be put to an end. Imagine a couple on the verge of divorce after many years of tension and conflict in their marriage.

They've done everything possible to keep that marriage intact, considering their children one being of special needs. Imagine a 16-year-old girl who's terrified of her alcoholic and abusive father, who routinely violates her and threatens to hurt her family members if she reports him. And finally, imagine a young couple a Catholic couple who recently have begun to walk away from their faith and explore the world and practices of the occult.

These are just a few of a long list of circumstances that people find themselves in today. Stories of hardship, of fear, of addiction, of abuse, of uncertainty, of depression, of evil activity. Now, you might ask, who are these people? And where do they live? I want you to look outside those windows.

What do you see? On its face, a pleasantly quiet street, perfectly manicured grass, majestic evergreen trees. On most days, there's a gentle breeze. And with just the right amount of sunlight, we might believe that all is well.

My dear brothers and sisters, it's not what we see that I am concerned about this morning. It's what we don't see. No, we don't see what's going on behind those walls.

We don't see the turmoil, the fear, the abuse, the crisis, the tension, the depression, the shortcomings, the witchcraft, the hopelessness. But just because we don't see it, let's not pretend that it doesn't exist. Don't get me wrong, I believe and enjoy.

Forgive me. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy fairy tales. But I don't want to live in one.

Reading the Bible, but more importantly, believing in the content of the Bible prevents me from seeing the world in an unrealistic way. If anyone, anyone should see and expect a world as a fallen place, broken, full of sickness and sores, it should be us, Christians. The curtains and the blinders should not deceive us

from believing there's nothing there to see.

What's going on in our own lives? Think about your own household this morning. Is there tension? Is there conflict? Is there fear? Is there addiction? Is there loneliness? Is there hurt? Is there pain? And that's what Jesus in our lives. How much more for those who might not be with him? I hope this is speaking to you thus far.

I hope the Holy Spirit is speaking to you right now and you don't doubt for a second that you walked into this church by accident. If God is not speaking here, where is he going to speak? Here's the question, first question. Have we ever stopped and asked, why did God bring St. David's to this location? Location is a very important aspect and feature in scripture.

The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a city. In the Old Testament, we find Israel in the land of Canaan, then in the wilderness, forgive me, in Egypt, then in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai, and then eventually in the promised land. But it doesn't stop there.

In the New Testament, Jesus is born in Bethlehem, is raised in Nazareth, travels throughout Galilee, and is crucified in Jerusalem. The site of where the people of God gather, but even more, where they worship, is extremely important in scripture. It's not a footnote.

It's not inconsequential. St. David's finds itself situated in a very interesting place. To my left, Cedar Street.

To my right, Elmwood Street. To my back, Glen Oaks. What do they all have in common? They're all names of trees.

In fact, these are three of the five most common types of trees we find in scripture. Take cedar. It is often mentioned in the Old Testament, frequently understood as a symbol of the Messiah.

The Song of Songs says, the bride, the church, describes her promised bridegroom Christ this way. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. Elmwood, from elm trees, known for their beautiful appearance and marvelous spread branches.

This has also become a symbol of dignity and faithfulness in scripture. Finally, oaks. Some have argued that the wood of the cross was made out of an oak tree.

An oak tree is strong, that can endure anything. Oak trees tend to symbolize faithfulness and endurance through every trial. Interesting, eh? Alameda, the grove of trees that provide shade.

What is going on here? What is going on in our midst? We can miss it. We can think we're just in some random, ordinary place, or there's actually something going on that the eyes of faith can only see. Is it just random that God brought us here, or is God saying something to us as we have situated and fixed ourselves amongst these trees? Symbolic be it.

Now some of you might be asking, well, what's in front of us? Sixth Street. I'm sorry, I can't help you there. Although St. David's of Wales was born and lived in the sixth century, biblically, it might be a stretch, but God did create man and woman on the sixth day, so there could be something there, where the image of God was placed on man.

Now what do these trees symbolize, though? They symbolize, trees always symbolize in scripture, life and salvation, God's faithfulness and presence. From the garden, to the wood of the ark, to the interior parts of

the temple, and finally, to the wooden beams of the cross, all symbolize God's presence, life, and salvation. So again, I ask, why are we here? Why are we here and not some industrial complex, or by the ocean side, or by the desert, or at the top of some rural hillside? We are positioned in a special place that is sacred, where God's presence, faithfulness, life, and salvation dwells.

We can't take that for granted or miss that point. Second question, and we'll tie this all together at the end. How is this relevant to what I just said with today's reading? Well, in Amos, we have judgment upon Israel for their unfaithfulness.

They were called to be a light to the nations, and they have done just the opposite. They've become corrupt, idle, and evil. In the Ephesians, the spiritual blessings that come with being in Christ through faith.

So there's a juxtaposition between these two passages. The faith of those who rebel against God, and the faith of those who put their faith and trust in God. And here now, in the Gospel text that we just read, the faithful one, the faithful one, Christ, sends out the twelve to reach the last.

Will they, this new kind of Israel, it's not replacement theology, but a kind of new Israel, will they be faithful? Will they be like the Israel of old? Or will they model like the one they seek to follow? Jesus isn't asking them to do anything he himself hasn't done. In fact, he's modeled for them everything that he's asking them and calling them to do. Immediately after his baptism, what does he do? He goes out into Galilee and proclaims the following.

The time is fulfilled for the kingdom of God has come at hand. The kingdom of God is near. And repent and believe in the Gospel.

That's what Jesus preaches. And immediately after that, all you see Jesus is either entering a synagogue or a home. He's preaching, teaching, and casting out demons and healing the sick.

These are taking place in synagogues and taking place in homes. Remember, he was in a synagogue and exercised the demon out of the possessed man. Then he goes into Simon Peter's home and heals his mother-in-law, who was sick with fever.

And then they brought more sick to him and all those in the town that were possessed by demons. And he casted those out as well. Later again, most likely in Simon Peter's house, there's a paralytic man and he heals him.

They bring him down from the roof. He forgives the sins and he is healed, fully restored. Then he's in the home of Levi.

He's sitting amongst sinners and tax collectors. And then after healing the man with the withered hand, he's in a home again and his family thinks he's nuts. He's lost his mind.

He's always in a home. Jesus is always in a home or in a synagogue, in a place of gathering. And then where is he? He finds himself in Jairus' home where his 12-year-old daughter had just died and he raises her to life.

Now he's calling his disciples to do likewise, to go into people's homes, to preach the good news and to free them from any sort of stronghold. Mark doesn't give us more than that. But in the parallel passage in Matthew, this is what Jesus says.

He instructs them to proclaim the kingdom of God is at hand, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. Those were the words of Jesus to his disciples then and those are his words to his disciples today. What he has done, he is asking them to do.

Come and follow me. What does he do? He charges them to not take anything with them except a staff, sandals, and one tunic. He wants them to travel lightly.

Don't take any food, money, or a bag. Bags were used for beggars. So he's basically asking them to go there and trust that God will provide.

All I want you to do is go outside, reach the lost sheep of Israel. Without any resources, I will do the rest. The power of God will do the rest.

You must believe and you don't take resources so you can't boast that any of the results were because of you. All of those results, all of the effects of your work go back to God the Father. That's what he was commissioning his disciples to do.

And he warned them, some will receive you, some don't. The ones that don't, what does he say? Shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them. Essentially, a very common Old Testament practice, wash your hands.

Wash your hands. Some might not receive you, but you've done your part. Judgment be upon them or not.

That isn't up to you at that point. So again, what happens? They do exactly what Jesus asked them to do. They were faithful.

They go out into those homes. And what happens? They went out and carisso. Very similar to charisma, they proclaimed.

Repentance, which means more than just feel sorry for your sins. It means reorienting your life outlook and aims. And this is a warning.

And they cast out demons, and they anoint the sick with oil, and they're healed. Wow. How did these fishermen, these average folk, these farmers, these sinners, how were they able to be so successful with no money, no food, no bags, only a staff, sandals, and one tunic? Very simple.

Dido me atus exousia. He gave them authority. These disciples, apostles, were sent out with authority, exousia.

They didn't go out with their own will and power. They went out with the will and power of God who sent them out. And that's how people were able to be freed, healed.

Indeed, the kingdom of God is at hand. Hallelujah. Lives were changed.

Good news came to the poor. Captives were set free. Proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor was truly taking place in Galilee.

And now the final question I have. What are we going to do with this passage? How will we respond to this passage? Is this just a fun, cute little story for 12 men or maybe a community 2,000 years ago? No. God is inviting us to partner with him in bringing the good news to the poor.

The binding of the brokenhearted. The setting the captives free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor to the world. But will we go? Imagine those individuals that I described, those situations and circumstances that people found themselves in.

And let's not pretend there's nobody on this street that is going through difficult times right now. Now imagine all these people, all those kinds of situations and beyond that I didn't even list. One day get a knock on their door.

Hello. My name is Deacon Diane. I'm from St. David's Anglican Church from the corner.

How can I serve you and pray for you? Imagine you're in a circumstance. Hopeless. Maybe an ounce of faith.

And then there's a stranger at the door saying that God sent them to serve you. Imagine the possibilities. Imagine the breakthroughs.

Imagine the hope and the restoration that can take place in this neighborhood. But will we go? Israel in the time of Amos were not salt and light. The apostles were.

What about us? It's a question. If we read this text, we have to ask the question. What about us? The word Christian is only used twice in the Bible.

However, the word disciple is used 269 times. Because the Bible was written for disciples, about disciples, and to disciples. Are we Christians? Merely converts through baptism? Or are we disciples? What is a disciple? And remember, it's not what you have or don't have.

Whether it's wealth, the resources, health, age, energy. It's him. He gives us the energy.

He gives us, forgive me, not just the energy. He gives us his spirit and the authority. Jesus says, you will do greater things than I. Jesus is giving us his disciples authority.

Back then and now. We possess his Holy Spirit. Yes, his.

That's all we need. And that's why I'm here. Father Astor is here.

To nurture the parish of St. David, but also to reach the neighborhood, the community. That's why I'm here. That's why God has called me here.

It's to nurture, to strengthen, to feed the flock, but also to go out into the streets and reach the lost, the broken. Here I can hear St. Paul saying to us this morning, but God chose the foolish things in the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

We're ordinary people in here, but God can do extraordinary things with ordinary people. We have a neighborhood ministry that we're seeking to launch in the coming months. To go up and down these streets.

To knock on doors and ask if we can serve them in any way, shape, or form. I really believe there's a revival. I really believe we're in a place situated where God wants us to serve those who are near and far.

We're not here by accident. Imagine getting that knock on the door. This is the prayer you've been asking for.

There's many ways we can serve. If it's intimidating to walk up to a stranger, I understand that. But there's other ways we can serve in prayer, preparation.

Let us organize, strategize, and mobilize. There's so many ways that we can invest ourselves in the kingdom work in the neighborhood. But are we ready? Are we prepared? There's a hurting world out there.

A world trapped in lies, abuse, addiction, false beliefs. And God is calling us to go out into that world. The world is not some far place, miles away.

The world is right here for us. This is not a fairy tale. This is real.

Jesus is on Cedar. Jesus is on Elmwood. Jesus is on Glen Oaks.

He's really here. You have to see this place as a sacred place where God is going to use people as an instrument to reach the lost, the broken, the hurt, the abused, the lonely. Yes, but you have to believe with the eyes of faith.

You have to see it before it happens. You have to see it. There's nothing more enjoyable and fulfilling in life than serving others for God.

There really isn't. We can amass and hoard and accumulate all sorts of things, honors, treasures. But there's nothing more satisfying and fulfilling than giving.

To seeing a life transformed right before your eyes. It will make you cry. It will make you cry.

Those are good tears. These are tears of celebration. These are tears of joy.

But the question is, do you and I have enough faith that we can move mountains in this neighborhood? In Him was the life, and that life was the light of mankind. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Yes, we are called to be salt and light of Him.

Who is with me? If no one is with me, I will go by myself. But I believe there's many who are with me. Jesus sent them out in pairs.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. I end with this. Some here today do not believe.

Some here today, right now, after all that, do not believe. To you, I say this. Come and see the power of God.

Come and see the power of God, the breakthrough and the healing power this Sunday after the service. I really believe God is doing something on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings through prayer. Miracles did not cease in the first century.

Neither did healings. God is anointing us, bestowing upon us His Holy Spirit, the agency of restoration. I close with this image that we find in the last chapter of Revelation, chapter 22.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city. Also on either side of the river, the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and the Lamb of God will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. That's an image of the future, of the tree of life, where its branches are for the healing of the nations. Well, I believe Cedar Street, Elmwood, and Glen Oaks is not far from that image.

And we are going to be a place, I say it, we are going to be a place because I speak with authority. We are going to be a place of healing. Not to say we weren't, not to say we're not, but we will continue to be a place of healing.

But you and I have to go. You and I have to believe that it will happen. That the image of Revelation is something that we experience in our time, in our day, in our church.

Again I say, who is with me? Or more rightly, who is with God? Let us pray. Let us put childish things away. Let us grow in maturity and become adults in our faith.

Help us, O Lord, mature and grow. You've been patient with us. And you've used us, O Lord, tremendously.

I ask that you would use us even more. May our hands be open. Send us, O Lord, with authority to serve those around us.

Bless this church with your Holy Spirit. And make those who do not believe, believe beyond their wildest imaginations, O God. In your name we pray.

Amen.

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