

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

07.20.2025 | Transforming Love | Luke 10:25-37 | Philip Pattison: Executive Director, Foster the City

*Additional audio in full video/audio from Pastor Clark and Foster the City Video

* Pastor Clark Intro in full video/audio

*Philip Pattison

Well, good morning. I cannot tell you what a gift it is to get to be back with you. I was able to be here a few years ago. Such a gift, as Pastor Clark said, my name is Philip. I lead Foster the City. Yeah, about a decade ago now, that was pastoring a little church here in the Bay Area. About 100 or so of us meeting in a senior center, gathering every week, and our hearts began as a church to grow for kids and families that were in the foster care system. My wife and I were foster parents, and really our churches began to develop this heart, and so we began to connect with other leaders, other pastors, other churches, and we said, hey, what if we were to link arms together and work towards a day when there'd be more than enough? You see, we had discovered that there were more kids coming into foster care than there were families ready to help them. That broke our heart. I know that breaks your heart, and of course it breaks the heart of God.

And so we began to say, man, what would it look like for the church to change this? And so we began inviting pastors to join us, and what started in 2015, one little church in a senior center is today almost 340 churches that have linked arms together, and we're raising up foster families, we're raising up support teams for foster families, and we're committed to keep going until there's more than enough to meet the need. We have this collective vision that one day there will be a waiting list of families rather than a waiting list of kids in need of a home, and that it would be the church on the front line to help them to make that happen.

And so I want to honor you first, SF, I want to honor you for being a part of it. As soon as we expanded into San Francisco, First SF was one of the very first churches to say, we want to be a part of this. And so I want to honor you for that. Those of you who have taken steps, so there I was just chatting in the lobby before the service with a long-time kind of foster mom here in the church. Those of you who have stepped forward to support friends for foster parents, I want to honor those of you that have been giving generously to this church.

Again, this kind of sounds like a humble brag, please don't hear it that way. Foster the city gives everything away for free. There's no cost to churches. There's no charts of families that we serve. We give it all away for free, but there are some churches that say, no, no, no, no, no. Like we really believe in this. We want to invest in this vision, and First SF is one of those. That is just said, hey, we want to invest. We want to see more churches mobilized in more places to help more children in need in the name of Jesus. And so I want to honor you. As you give generously here to First SF, part of your generosity is linked to the lives of vulnerable kids in San Francisco. So I want to say thank you.

If I can let you behind the scenes a little bit. A decade ago when we first started this thing, this is a little embarrassing to say, but for the first like few days when we got this idea, I thought that we were the first ones to ever come up with something like this. I thought we were pioneers. We were innovators. And then I went on Google and come to find out, actually over the last 10, 15 years or so, there are movements like Foster the City springing up all over the country, like independently. It's happening in Arkansas, in Oregon, in Arizona, in Oklahoma. I mean, the list could go on and on and on. That did a couple of things for me. Number one, it humbled me just a little bit. It was probably a good thing. And then number two, it lit me up. Because what I began to realize is that like, it seems as if the Holy Spirit is like doing something across the American church, like reawakening the heart of the church for the vulnerable in our communities. And it's happening all over the country. And how cool is it that we get to be a part of that? If the spirit is doing something across the church, how cool is it that we get to be a part of that right here in the Bay Area? So we're just a small piece of the puzzle. So we are not the pioneers.

That said, there was a pioneer. And I'll have to tell you about him. His name is Bishop Aaron Blake. And this is him here. This is Bishop Blake. Bishop Aaron Blake was the pastor of a small congregation in Brownwood, Texas, in Brown County. Bishop Blake was by vocation. Also, he was also the at-risk counselor at the local high school. And so he was a kind of counselor that would have kids kind of coming in and out of his office all throughout the day needing to talk. One of

those kids was a boy named Melvin Johnson. Melvin Johnson was on the high school football team. He was also in the foster care system. And one day, Melvin came into Bishop Blake's office and he had tears streaming down his face. And he sat down and he began to tell Bishop Blake of another-- it's called a failed placement, which simply means that he was getting kicked out of another foster home. This is the fifth time that it happened in Melvin's young life.

So he's telling Bishop Blake about this. And Bishop Blake really knew nothing about foster care. He didn't really know how to encourage the kids. He says, "Oh, Melvin, I'm so sorry. Melvin, I'm sorry. Man, you're such a great kid. If there's anything I could do, man, if I could take you in, I would. I'm so sorry." And Melvin said, "Wait, you would help a kid like me?" Bishop Blake said, "Oh, of course I would, Melvin. I'm so sorry." So I'm sorry this is happening. So Melvin wipes his eyes and goes on with his day. Not long after that, Bishop Blake got a phone call. Do you know where this is going? So Bishop Blake gets a phone call and it's a social worker. And the social worker says, "Erin Blake, I'm here with a boy named Melvin Johnson and he said that you said that you want him to come live with you." And Bishop Blake said, he's kind of stuttered and stammered on the phone. He's like, "I'm going to need to talk to my wife about that." And so he goes home and he sits his wife Mary down and he tells Mary this story and he gets to the part about the phone call and Mary interrupts him and she says, "Erin," she doesn't call him Bishop. She said, "Erin, I sure hope you told them yes. I sure hope you told them

So they brought Melvin into their home. Not long after that though, the tight end on the football team needed a placement. And Melvin said, "It's okay, you can come live with me and the Blakes." And so the tight end came home. But then the fullback needed a placement. And then the other fullback needed a placement. And then the defensive back needed a placement. All told, they ended up with six teenage boys in their home. Bishop Lake, when he told us this story, he said that before the kids would come into their house, he would stand out on the sidewalk with them and he would point at the door and he'd say, "Listen, when you walk through that door, you're being grafted into my family." That was the language he used. When you walk through that door, you're going to be grafted into this family. In other words, I'm going to love you, I'm going to provide for you, I'm going to protect you, I'm going to care for you, as if you are my own flesh and blood. And nothing's going to change that.

And that wasn't just some sweet sentiment that was, as you can imagine, tried and tested in a lot of small ways and some big ways, including this one night, when middle of the night, one of the boys was up in his room and he was playing with matches. And he accidentally caught the curtains on fire. Within a matter of minutes, the entire Blake family was out on the sidewalk, watching their house burn to the ground. That was the house where they had raised their biological kids. It was the house where they had, you know, again, countless prized possessions and memories burnt to the ground. When Bishop Blake told us his story, he said that all he could think of as he was standing there watching his house burn was what his wife was thinking next to. It's like, man, like, is she regretting saying yes to these kids? Like, look at what it's cost her. Us opening our lives and our hearts and our homes to show hospitality to these kids in need, like, is she regretting saying yes, considering all the sacrifice, all the cost? But you know what Mary said? After all was said and done and the fire trucks had driven off, Mary just turned to Bishop Blake and said, well, better get to the store, the boys have school in the morning. And so at 2 a.m., they were walking up and down the aisles of Walmart, buying a change of clothes and buying some school supplies.

But here's where it gets interesting. The next day, the kids didn't actually go to class. They cut class. They were so sure that once again, social workers were going to come to the school and tell them that they had yet another failed placement. I mean, surely they were going to get kicked out of the Blake. I mean, they burnt the house down, right? They'd cross the line. But it wasn't the social worker that went and found the boys. It was Bishop Blake. They were hiding in the gym. And so he went and found the boys and he brought them back to the hotel where they were now staying. And he sat them on the bed and he said, guys, listen, I told you you were being grafted into this family and nothing is going to change that. And that night he held an adoption ceremony in that hotel room for those boys. Not beautiful.

Story doesn't end there, though, because I told you he was also a pastor. And now he'd come face to face with the reality that there were kids like this in his community that needed love and needed hospitality and needed home and needed attachment. And so one Sunday morning, he stood in front of his congregation. And he said, guys, listen. There are more kids like these boys entering into the foster care system than there are families ready to help them. He said it should not be this way. And so he asked his congregation this really simple question. He said, who will stand with this for these kids?

That was a question he asked. Who will stand with this for these children? And guess what? A woman in his congregation stood up. And she said, I will Bishop. And then another woman stood up and said, I will. And then another person said, if I will to Bishop. And that little congregation, they ended up finding 15 new foster families. And within a matter of months, 39 children from the foster care system were running through their hallways as a church. And then other congregations in their area began to hear what was happening. And they said, we want to be a part of this, too. And so they started raising up foster families with support. And then in 2004, in Brown County, they got to this place where there was literally a waiting list of families rather than a waiting list of kids. And then they worked year after year after year after year to make sure that it stayed that way. That awesome. Yeah.

Bishop Blake, he's the pioneer. That's the pioneer. Those are the footsteps that we follow. Now, I don't know most of you, but I, I would put money that, that not one of you, as you listen to that story, there's not one of you who was thinking to yourself, man, what a fool. Man, what, what a mistake. I don't even get it. It cost him his house. What a fool. Not one of you thought that. In fact, I think that for many of us, when we hear stories like this, there's, there's something that wells up deep within us. There's something that rises up in us. And it says, man, that is a life well lived. Right? There's something in us that says, man, I wish my life told a story like that. Am I right?

The reason I know that's true is because that's what you and I were made for. Right? We were, the scripture said we were created in Christ Jesus for good works. God, God says to Abraham, you are blessed. Why? So that you might be a blessing. Right. We, we love because Christ first loved us. Right. This is, this is the natural outworking of who we are now in Jesus is that we're not just recipients of love and blessing, but we're also now extenders of that same love and blessing towards those around us in need. And what I want to do today is I want to kind of double down on that reality. I want to look together at a passage of scripture, stories from scripture that I think is actually pretty similar to the blakes. It's going to be found in Luke chapter 10. This is a pretty familiar story to many of us. But I think that there are some things that there's some things that at least that I'm learning for the first time that have made this kind of come alive. And I'm excited to share this with you. Luke chapter 10. I'll read it in its entirety and then we'll unpack it.

Starting in verse 25. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus teacher. He asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Well, what's written in the law? Jesus replied, how do you read it? He answered, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself. You've answered correctly. Jesus replied, do this and you'll live. But he wanted to justify himself. So he asked Jesus, well, who's my neighbor? So when replied, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes. They beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road. And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So to a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him pass by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said. And when I returned, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. So Jesus told him, go and do likewise.

Okay. Three things I want to pull out today. First, Jesus gives us a mandate as followers of his followers of Jesus. I guess a mandate towards love. Secondly, he gives us the measure of love to which we're called. And then ultimately the means the mandate, the measure and the means. First, the mandate. It's real simple. We are to see. And then to move with compassion. To see and to care. Again, Jesus has first said that a priest and a Levite, they see the man. But what they saw did not move them to pity and compassion. In fact, they went out of their way to avoid the man who was in need. You and I know this is. Extra heartbreaking, but he didn't just say there were a couple of guys that walked by. He said it was a priest and a Levite. These are varsity level religious leaders. Better than anybody, they would have known God's heart for the vulnerable.

To get to where they were as a priest and as a Levite, they would have had to spend a significant amount of their life studying the scriptures, memorizing large swaths of the Old Testament. They would have they would have studied scriptures like like Deuteronomy 15 that says, if among you, one of your brothers should become poor, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother. But you shall open your hand to him and lend him

sufficient for his need. Whatever it may be. They would have known Psalm 82 that says, defend the weak and the fatherless uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed rescue the weak and the needy. They would have known Proverbs 19 that says, whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord and he will repay him for his deed. They would have known Isaiah 58 that says, share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house.

They knew about God's heart for the vulnerable. Listen, and yet what they knew about God was not moving them to become like God. The religion was an abstract disembodied knowledge. Martin Luther King Jr said it like this. He said, in the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many those are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern. And I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion, which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular. In other words, listen, Jesus didn't just come to preach about the poor. He didn't just come to even to preach to the poor. He came to also lift up the poor. He didn't just come to preach about mercy and compassion and justice. He came to show compassion and mercy and justice. Our faith is not just something we sing about. A disembodied abstract faith is not found in the Bible. It is lived out on the ground, in the streets, in our schools, in our workplaces. Listen, I heard somebody say the other day, Jesus is not going to one day say, Oh, well read my good and faithful servant. Oh, well studied my good and faithful servant. He's going to say, well done. My good and faithful servant. Martin Luther, not to be confused with MLK, but the original OG Martin Luther. He said this, he said the world does not need a definition of religion as much as it needs a demonstration. Jason Johnson is an author and a foster dad. He says it like this. If this doesn't get us riled up, honestly, I don't know what will. He says we cannot rightly raise our hands in worship of a God that steps towards us in our heart and broken and then use those same hands to push the heart and broken of others away.

What will we do with what we see in front of us? Right now in the Bay area, there are thousands of kids in the foster care system. And if these kids are not placed into a loving stable home, then a third are going to end up spending time out on those streets. Half will develop a substance addiction. More than half will develop PTSD. Suicidal tendencies for kids in foster care are four times higher than their peers. The FBI tells us that more than half of the kids that they're rescuing from human trafficking here in the States come directly from the foster care system. I could keep going. The point is this, though, like these aren't just numbers. These aren't just stat like every every number has a name. Right. Every every stat has a story. Each of these stories matter to God. And because your stories matter, God, their stories matter to us. Don't they, church?

I heard just not too long ago, the social worker from down south was telling us about a couple of kids. A three year old little boy and an eight year old little girl, they've been living in a government facility for nine months because they can't find a family for them. Nine, nine months without family. Three year old little boy. They said this three year old little boy is so developmentally delayed that he has yet to walk three. They said this eight year old little girl has had to be mom to her siblings for so long that she doesn't play like she won't play on the playground. She won't play with toys because her brain has been wired to be caregiver rather than child. So your stories like this. So it goes to remind you of like who will who will open up their home, who will open up their heart and bring this little three year old boy in and teach him how to walk. Who will bring this eight year old little girl into their home and teach her how to be a child here in the Bay?

Just recently we heard we got an email from a social worker about a 12 year old little girl. I have a 12 year old myself. So this one hits especially hard for me, but I this 12 year old little girl, they said she's been abandoned by her family. They can't find any family that will take her in. This is what the social worker said. They said she's done what she's had to do to survive. She's 12. In other words, she's been pimped out already as a 12 year old little girl and they can't find a family that will welcome her in. We can't become ambivalent to stories like that. We cannot become cows. We cannot call normal that which God is weeping over. What will we do with what we see in front of us? Jesus is calling you and me to see and to move towards the need. That's exactly what the Good Samaritan does. Let's see what it took for him to move towards this man. Let's look at the measure of his love.

First, he puts himself at risk, puts himself in danger. There's something pretty interesting about this parable. We all know that this is a parable, right? This Good Samaritan story. So it's not real. It didn't happen. It's a fictional story that Jesus made up to convey some truths to us. What's really interesting though about this parable is although it's fiction, he's been in the Bay. What's really interesting about this parable is although it's fiction, he puts it in an actual location. He

puts it in an actual place. He doesn't normally do that, but this time he does. Why do you do that? He says this happened on this one road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Why would he include that detail? Scholars will tell you that that most of the listeners probably knew exactly what Jesus was talking because that stretch of road was infamous. It was actually known as the bloody way or the path of blood because it was so much more than the way it was. It was so common for people to get jumped on that specific road. Why would he include that detail? Maybe what he was trying to say, well, maybe some of those listeners, as they're listening to Jesus tell the story and they recognize this road that he's. Maybe some of them are thinking to themselves, well, so the priest will let it go. They see this half dead man. Of course, they pick up their pace, right? Maybe the robbers are still nearby. Maybe that's a trap. They're just going to, they're going to get jumped to. In fact, for them to pick up their pace and move on, that's just good common sense.

But maybe that's the point. Maybe what Jesus is saying is, listen, I want you to love your neighbor in need, even when it doesn't make sense. I want, I'm asking you to, to be willing to inconvenience yourself or maybe even put yourself in harm's way. If that's what your neighbor needs. This is so counterintuitive to a, to a culture like ours. It's so values self preservation, right? This is, this is hard to hear. It's hard to say. It's, it's so counterintuitive to us because any time we see a need in front of us, set foster care aside. You see your buddy who's, whose marriage is falling apart. You know that emotionally they're really struggling and you see his name come up on your phone. You think, if I pick up this call, how long is this going to take?

Anytime we see a need bigger as well, we do this like cost analysis. If I move towards this need, what will this cost me? How much time will this take? How, how is this going to impact my plans for the day? How will this impact my resources? My, my ambitions for my life, my sense of safety and security and stability. We always do this cost analysis. What will this day when we talk with folks about foster care, these are often the concerns we hear. They say, man, but if you say yes to a kid who's experienced a lot of trauma, what if they act out of that trauma? What if they misbehave? Like what if some of the dysfunction that led to the entrance into foster care, what if they bring some of that dysfunction into Or on the flip side, like what if the kids come into your home and they're with you for, I don't know, a year or two and you fall in love with them. They become like, like your, your, your, your own son, your own daughter. And then one day you get a call from a social worker and they get picked up and you never see them again. Isn't that hard? You want to know the answer to that? Oh, yes. Rips your heart out. It rips your heart out. It rips your heart out. But surely our lives were meant to be more than just about getting to the finish line as safely and as comfortably as possible. Right. Surely your life was meant for so much more than that.

I heard somebody say the other day, he said, I said, I often hear I often hear people say we should be the hands and feet of Jesus. And I said, man, I, of course I agree with that. The problem is so many of us, we forget that the hands and feet of Jesus had nails in them. Of course there's a cost. But I'll just, I'll say it again. Surely your life, surely my life was meant to be so much more than just about getting to the finish line as safely and as comfortably as possible. He has so much more in store for us than that. There's this great verse in James one. Many of you are probably familiar with it. It's probably the kind of pinnacle verse in the New Testament about our response towards those in need. It's James. He says religion that God sees as pure and fault is this to care for orphans and widows and their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world. Great verse. A couple of verses away. James also says this. He says, if we are not just a hearer of the word, but a doer of the word, we will be blessed in our doing. So there is a blessed, if you're not just somebody who hears and studies and sings about this, but you actually put it into practice and you become a person of compassion and a person of love. There is a blessing. It's not a paycheck, but there is a blessedness to be experienced and abundant life that God has for us.

We've seen this in some small ways and in some big ways in our family's life. I'll give you one example. The second little girl that we brought into our home, her name is Karina. She came in. She was six years old. She left our house and she was seven.

So many great memories, beautiful memories with her on her seventh birthday. I remember taking her to Yosemite. She'd never been camping before. So we took her to Yosemite. We camped and we surprised her with a bike. And I remember teaching her how to ride her bike on like the paved trails in Yosemite. I've got this like memory etched in my mind of this little girl riding her bike with like the beautiful picturesque Yosemite in the background. Like I'll never forget that some beautiful memories at the same time. Karina had experienced a lot in her young life. And so when she came

into our home, she came in and she had quite and throughout the time that she was with us, my wife and I just felt like, man, we are not able to meet this little girl's needs. It was one of the most difficult seasons of our family's life. Most nights when we put our head down on the pillow, we would just say, man, I don't think we heard God ride on this one. This is so, so hard. I remember at one point just being in my pastor's office, just weeping, tears streaming. I just, I stink at this fostering thing. Here I am. I'm leading foster the city. I'm up here standing in front of churches asking people to join us in doing this. And I can't even do it myself. I'm failing in our home. I'm failing this little girl. It was one of the hardest seasons of our life. And let me just tell you that what God can do, even in spite of our weaknesses and seeming failures, let me just remind us of what God can do.

There was a moment. There's this one day when we had to take Karina to a visit with her biological mom. That's one of the goals in foster care is to help try to keep these kids connected to their biological family. So one day, hopefully they can be reconciled and restored as a family. We serve a God of reconciliation and a God who loves to see broken things made new. So we want to, whenever possible, help families find restoration and newness as well. So we're dropping Karina off for a visit with her mom. Two hours, we're going to drive down to a restaurant, get dinner, and then come back and pick her up. So we drive down, have our meal, come back out to the parking lot, and somebody slashed our tires. Don't know why it happened still, but we were out there and I was like, shoot, we got to go get Karina. So I called one of our support friends. Her name was Jean. We said, Jean, is there any way you could stop what you're doing and drive down and pick up Karina? She was also a social worker so she could do that. So she drove down to the county building and she picked up Karina. While she was picking her up, she also got into a conversation with Karina's mom. Her mom's name was Tracy. Jean and Tracy got in this conversation and what sparked was a friendship, a friendship that's lasted till this day.

And so eventually Karina did go back and she did reunify with her family. And so Jean then reached out and said, hey, listen, Tracy, as you guys are rebuilding as a family, what if you come to church? What if you came to our church and just found some of that community support that might be helpful for you guys as you're rebuilding? And Tracy said, okay. So she came to church on Sunday and then she came back the next week and then they came back the next week. And then after about two years, we got to see Tracy baptized as a follower of Jesus. And then, yeah, and then two years after that, two years after that, I get a phone call and, uh, and so not a phone call, rather, it was a message on social media. Uh, and Tracy reached out and she said, uh, she said, hey, Philip, um, guess what? Our, our Karina, who by the way is 12 at this point, she said, Karina's placed her faith in Jesus too. And, uh, she said, Karina's quoting scripture at me and says she's got to get baptized. And so they said, we just wanted to know if you'd be willing to be the one to do that.

And so this little girl that came into our home sad and lonely and scared and hurting and in need. This little girl that we thought throughout the entire time she was with us, we were just completely failing this little girl. So what she's going to end up leaving our home worse often when she came in. And that's how it felt. God allowed us to see what he was weaving through all of that seemingly weakness and seeming, seeming failure on the day that, um, on the day that we, we baptized her, uh, as, as our sister in Christ. Now, um, my, my wife, when he got in the car, she turned over, she turned to me and she said, uh, she said, Philip, this is easily one of the greatest days of my life. Walking through what seemed like hell for so long coming on this side of it and seeing this, this girl, not just find home for a short season, but home in the kingdom of God. Oh, I've said, this is easily one of the greatest days of my life. Jean, who was obviously there, that social worker, a support friend of ours. She came up to my wife and she said, uh, she said, if somebody were to walk up to me right now and hand me a million dollars, I wouldn't be any happier than I am right now in this moment.

That's the blessedness that James is talking about. If we're not just hearers of the word, but we are doers of the word, we will be blessed in our, there was an abundance that can be experienced if we're willing to move towards our, the walk through hard things and the sake of compassion for the Again, our lives are meant to be more than just about getting to the finish line as safely and comfortably as possible. The Samaritan put himself in harm's way. And then we, we see that he gave what he had to help the man. The Samaritan, we're told, took his wine and his oil and he would have used that to cleanse and to disinfect the wound. And then he bound up the man's broken body and he placed the man on his own donkey and he brought him to an end. We're told that he took out his wallet. He gave out to Denari. That would have been two months rent for this man to get better. And he gave it to the innkeeper to make sure the man had all the time, all the resources that he needed to recover. That's the kind of generosity. That's the kind of compassion that you and I are being invited into today. And I want to share with you a story about a, about a foster the city family that did just that

right here in the Bay area who opened up their hearts, opened up their home to someone at need. So let's watch this video.

***Video transcript in full video/audio**

***Philip Pattison**

My favorite line in that whole story is when Alicia says right there at the end, she says, "How do you take stranger and love them into family?" Because Jeralee didn't just find some love and support for a season. Loyal didn't just find family for a season. That Alicia's family loved Jeralee into the family of God. Jeralee's placed her faith in Jesus. She's a part of their church community now. I want my life to tell a story like that, don't you? So to whom is God calling you to show compassion? Maybe even throughout this morning, there's been a face that's come into your mind. It could be a neighbor, it could be somebody at your work, it could be a family, or somebody who's going through all her time. And God is calling you not to keep your distance, to move in, move in. Maybe it is, maybe God has stirred your heart to maybe want to learn more about Foster the City.

If I haven't made it clear yet, we have a need for more foster families in our area. Have I said that yet? There is a profound need for more foster families in San Francisco and across the Bay Area. Maybe that's something you can learn about and explore. Maybe you can learn about becoming a support friend for a foster parent. So for every foster family we raise up, we want to wrap them with at least four households that would provide practical, emotional, spiritual support to help a family foster longer and stronger. So these support friends are bringing meals, they're babysitting, they're showing up and doing yard work, they're picking up the dirty clothes off the porch and cleaning it and dropping it back off. What these support friends are doing is they're providing extra capacity to help these families care well for the kids that are in their home.

Maybe that's a role that you could explore. If you are interested in getting involved with Foster the City in any way, your next step is simply to come out and see me out in the lobby. I'm going to give you a little next step card. I'm going to have you fill it out and we're going to invite you to an interest meeting. We have these virtually over Zoom. It's a webinar. You don't even have to get dressed back up and come back to church. Okay. You can literally take it from your living room and your pajamas. All right. So if you fill out the next step card, I will send you an email with more information on that. That's your next step.

All right. So we've got, we've seen the mandate of love to which God has called us, the measure of love to which he's called us, but we've got to close with the means. I'm sure that I'm up against it on time. But if we stop here, if we stop here, I think that all I will have managed to do is to put on our shoulders a burden that is probably too heavy for any of us to bear. If I'm honest, in Luke chapter 10, I would read Luke 10 over the years. This story would not motivate me or liberate me or inspire me to go out and live a life of compassion. Honestly, it just feels crushing to me. Who can live a life like this? I think that I've been missing a certain part of the story. I know it's been a long morning. We just lean in for just a second. Okay. We got to turn our thinking caps on here for a minute because listen, the key to understanding this parable, I think. The key to understanding this parable is where Jesus places the Jewish man in the story.

Stay with me. If Jesus would have placed the Jewish man on the donkey and the Samaritan man on the ground, that would have made a ton of sense. Because remember, remember the question that sparked the parable. Remember that this all starts. There's a Jewish religious leader who's trying to do two things. Number one, he's trying to trap Jesus because he sees him as an enemy. And number two, he's trying to justify himself before God. And so he asked this question, what do I have to do to be saved? Who is the neighbor that I have to love in order to inherit eternal life? That's what sparked all of this. Who is the neighbor that I have to love in order to be saved?

So if Jesus would have responded, okay, imagine you're going down on a donkey or down the road on a donkey. And you see this Samaritan man on the ground. This Samaritan, I know you, you hate the Samaritans, you're racist towards them. You see them as despicable as less than human. If you see even a Samaritan who's been beaten and bloodied on the ground, even he is your neighbor. I want you to be willing to even get in the dirt with him, not keeping your distance, but I want you to get down in the dirt with him. Even if it puts you in harm's way, I want you to use your resources and do what it takes to love. Even the Samaritan neighbor. That would have made a ton of sense. But Jesus doesn't do that, does

he? He flips it. He puts the Jewish man on the ground. He puts the Samaritan on the donkey. Why would he do that? Perhaps this is what Jesus is saying. Do you really want to know how to be saved? Do you really want to know how to inherit eternal life? If so, then you need to see that you are the man on the ground. That you are the one that is helpless and beat up and wounded and hopeless. And you need somebody that you once saw as an enemy to come towards you and see you in your need. And to get down in the dirt with you and help you and bring healing and wholeness to you again. The expert in the law had been trying his whole life to justify himself before God through his knowledge of the Scriptures, through his obedience to the Scriptures.

I don't know about you, I so resonate with this. Every morning I wake up with this propensity that I have to earn my way back to God. These are the questions that go through my mind. I think, oh God, have I been good enough yet? God, have I helped enough people yet? Have we rallied enough churches yet? Have I managed my sin well enough yet? To be accepted by you? There's actually this prayer that I pray literally every single morning. And a couple of the lines in this prayer that I pray, I say this, God, would you help me to live today as a beloved child of God? Living with confidence knowing that there is no mistake that I can make today that will cause you to love me less. And with humility knowing there's no accomplishment that will make you love I pray that prayer every single morning because every morning I wake up with this bent that I have to work my way to God.

But listen, what Jesus is not telling me in Luke 10, and he's not telling you, and he was not telling this religious leader, if you want to be saved, you must become a good Samaritan. That's not what he's saying. I think what he's saying is, you have to see that I am the good Samaritan. That I see you right where you are, and you're helpless and hopeless and broken, but I'm not going to keep my distance, but I'm going to get in the dirt with you. Not just at the thought that it might actually cost me something, but knowing it's going to cost me my very life, I'm going to get in the dirt with you. I see you, and I'm moving towards you. I'm going to take what I have, my wine and my oil, in other words, my blood and my spirit, and I'm going to make you whole again. He's the good Samaritan, and it's only when we see Jesus as our good Samaritan that we can slowly become like our good Samaritan.

When we get this, and when we see somebody who's struggling in front of us, we can't judge them or look down on them or be callous towards them or ambivalent towards them anymore because we know that we're looking in a mirror, right? We can look at them and say, "Oh, me too. Oh, that was my story too." Again, it's only when we see Jesus as our good Samaritan that we can, little by little, become like our good Samaritan. Let me close with this. Every time I read a Bible story, maybe you do this too, I try to see myself in the story, like, who do I resonate with in that specific season of my life? So I told you, when I read this story now, I see Jesus as the good Samaritan. I once was the man on the ground, but he's picked me up, and little by little, he's making me whole again.

Can I tell you who I resonate the most with right now, though, in this story? It's the innkeeper. Because now I find Jesus bringing people to me that need care, whether it's my family, my friends, my neighbors, kids in foster care families. Just like the good Samaritan with the two denarii, Jesus has given me all of the resources that I need to care for those with whom he's bringing to me. And just like the good Samaritan, Jesus will one day come back, and I'll have to give an account for how I cared for those with whom he's entrusted me. I think the same is true for you.

So I've never had six teenage boys in my house. I've never had my house burned to the ground. But I will just, I'll echo the question that Bishop Blake asked this congregation, and I'll just say, who will stand with us for the vulnerable? Whether it's a kid in foster care or it's the person in your life that's in need, that family, will we be a people of compassion?