

Text: Matthew 25:34-40; II Corinthians 9:9-11

Title: "Showing I Care for Those in Need"

Introduction: Good Morning BMZ! TODAY, we are KICKING OFF this series called, "OPEN BEFORE CHRISTMAS"! DURING this SERIES we will LOOK at FOUR GIFTS we should NOT WAIT until CHRISTMAS to OPEN! Gifts FROM US to OTHERS...

I remember as a KID receiving some GREAT GIFTS from SANTA! When I was in 4th GRADE I received a BIKE ... a 3-Speed Schwinn ... RED! That was a GREAT GIFT!

Great MEMORIES from Christmas as FAMILY and as CHURCH ... GIVING GIFTS ... We did a LIVE NATIVITY SCENE. People were SO THANKFUL for us SITTING out in the COLD with SMELLY SHEEP!

Alright, let's TALK about some GIFTS that are EVEN BETTER and WE DON'T have to WAIT for CHRISTMAS to OPEN THEM ... GIFTS we can "OPEN BEFORE CHRISTMAS". OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, WE are going to TALK ABOUT GIFTS we can GIVE to our FAMILY, our NEIGHBORS and our WORLD. BUT, this week, we KICK OFF the SERIES talking about HOW to GIVE GIFTS for those in NEED.

IF you haven't already, GRAB your MESSAGE NOTES ... *Take out your MESSAGE NOTES and CONNECTION card. You will see there are blanks to fill in ... Please take the time to do so. Grab a PEN and write down whatever else you think is important to you and your faith journey. After worship, drop off your CONNECTION CARD and take your MESSAGE NOTES home. Please Re-read the Scripture and the notes to keep growing and learning. For those of you on-line, you can go to our website, www.bmzchurch.org ... find the NOTES and follow along ... LET'S PRAY (turn off marked lights during prayer)!*

As we get into this SERIES, I'm EXCITED to be REMINDED by our BIBLES that GOD gave the ULTIMATE GIFT. As we PREPARE ourselves and our HEARTS for Christmas, I hope we REMEMBER we CELEBRATE, NOT a BABY, BUT, a SAVIOR! God LOVED us SO MUCH, He SENT His SON to DIE the DEATH WE DESERVE. And, God is SO GOOD at GIVING ... the ULTIMATE GIVER, the MORE we get to KNOW HIM, the MORE we REALIZE we CANNOT OUTGIVE GOD!

In a COUPLE of WEEKS, we are GOING to USE the story of the GOOD SAMARITAN to talk about, "Who is our Neighbor"? Jesus stated in the parable that our NEIGHBOR...

My Neighbor: SOMEONE ON MY WAY = co-worker, friend, family member, bank teller, coffee shop, gas station, might be a "neighbor". In a COUPLE WEEKS, we'll talk about what to do for a neighbor. BUT TODAY we are talking about THOSE in NEED...

Those in Need: SOMEONE OUT OF MY WAY = People we do NOT THINK OF every day. These are the "out of sight, out of mind" people. We KNOW there are NEEDS in our towns and AREA, but let's not keep talking about it! We know there will be a record number of HOMELESS people in WISCONSIN this Christmas. We know MANY in Crawford and Grant counties LIVE BELOW the POVERTY line ... We KNOW there are PEOPLE / KIDS in our AREA who do NOT have ENOUGH to EAT. BUT we DO NOT like to THINK about IT.

Often, the ONLY TIME we THINK about it is when those PEOPLE who are OFTEN OUT of our WAY are suddenly IN our WAY! We SEE them and start to JUDGE them by their LOOKS or their CLOTHES ... or, they ASK for MONEY or whatever. And, if we are HONEST, we have MOMENTS when we get ANNOYED or ANGRY and LOOK DOWN on them... and, we DON'T KNOW exactly WHAT to DO.

TODAY, I want us to LOOK at what the BIBLE says about HOW we should CARE for those in NEED ... HOW we should TREAT persons who are OUT of OUR WAY ... THIS Scripture PASSAGE is sometimes called: "*The Great Compassion*" ... Hear God's compassionate heart for people through the words of Jesus ... MATTHEW 25:34-36, 40 =³⁴ "*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.*"³⁵ "*For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.*"³⁶ "*I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.*"¹ 40 "*And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'*"²

Jesus speaks about SIX SPECIFIC NEEDS here that can be split into TWO CATAGORIES: PHYSICAL and RELATIONAL.

PHYSICAL = HUNGRY / THIRSTY / NAKED ... I HOPE most of us understand as FOLLOWERS of Jesus Christ, WE are people who HELP people. IF we CAN help someone physically, WE DO it. Food, water, clothing... BUT, that's NOT ALL we do!

RELATIONAL = STRANGER / SICK / PRISONER ... Jesus talks about how we are to treat people with relational needs. STRANGER / ISOLATED / LONELY ... someone with NO FRIENDS ... Do we welcome them? Those who are sick ... are we there for them in their time of need? How about those who are prisoners? I'm not sure Jesus is just talking about people who have broken the law and are now behind bars... Think of the ways we all become prisoners: addictions, workaholic, habits, depression, etc. Do we visit them? Do we offer ourselves to those people? Do we treat them, no matter where they are in life, with DIGNITY? You know, PEOPLE ... created in the IMAGE of God, BY God that God LOVES dearly?

So, how, exactly, are we supposed to live if we want to be who God wants us to be? How do we live out this life when it comes to addressing the needs of the people around us? Well, the writer of Deuteronomy gives us some insight ... Deuteronomy 15:11 =¹ "*There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need.*"³

In the Hebrew ... "SHARE FREELY" meant to LIVE LITERALLY OPEN-HANDED. Living with your PALMS OPEN and RELEASING what you have for the POOR ... a SIGN of GENEROSITY. This SCRIPTURE from Deuteronomy reminds us there are TWO WAYS to LIVE: Open-Handed and Close-Handed.

Close-Handed = Make a FIST. Try to pick up your notes. You CAN'T PICK UP anything NEW when your HAND is CLOSED. When we LIVE SELFISHLY, God can NOT BLESS US with something NEW! #2 = Close your FIST again. Try to SHAKE HANDS with the person next to you. I know, knuckle bump; but, it's not the same. If we LIVE CLOSED-HANDED, it's HARD to CONNECT with other PEOPLE ... we are SELFISH; not, SELFLESS!

Open-Handed = LIVING a LIFE of GENEROSITY ... Willing to GIVE of OURSELVES / TIME / STUFF! Here's what people who LIVE OPEN-HANDED like God calls us to, KNOW: They KNOW GOD'S economy is different from the WORLD economy. The WORLD economy says, "*What's mine is mine and if I can get my hands on some of your stuff, that's okay too!*" BUT, what GODLY, Open-Handed people have figured out is: WHEN we're GENEROUS, we are AMAZINGLY BLESSED, and we have MORE than we ever EXPECTED (not just material stuff)!

¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 25:34-36). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 25:40). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Dt 15:11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

So, today we are going to talk about 4 WAYS WE can HELP those in NEED by living OPEN-HANDED in a mostly CLOSE-HANDED WORLD!

4 WAYS TO SHOW I CARE FOR THOSE IN NEED:

1. REFUSE to IGNORE the NEEDS any longer

REFUSE to IGNORE the NEEDS any longer ... WRITE that down.

Ever had a SMOKE DETECTOR battery get low ... you know that CHIRP thing it does? Here's what happens IF you do NOT CHANGE the BATTERY ... You get USED TO the CHIRPING! If you leave it long enough, you DON'T even HEAR IT ANYMORE.

Here's what I've FIGURED OUT: My MIND is GOOD at BLOCKING OUT things that make me UNCOMFORTABLE or I DON'T LIKE. AND, I think the same thing HAPPENS when we are around PEOPLE in NEED. I think we get SO USED TO some PEOPLE being NEEDY, we start to IGNORE them ... we walk or drive by and just IGNORE the person who might have a DEEP NEED we could CARE for IF we would REFUSE to IGNORE IT!

The BIBLE says it is CRIMINAL to IGNORE the NEEDS of the POOR ... **Proverbs 14:21 = ²¹ It is a sin to belittle one's neighbor; blessed are those who help the poor.** ⁴ Sometimes we do WORSE than IGNORE them ... we BELITTLE them. We look down on OTHER PEOPLE like WE are BETTER or MORE WORTHY of GOD'S LOVE than THEY ARE! I think we need to be more like Jesus...

In Luke 5, JESUS is near a GALILEAN VILLAGE and meets a man with LEPROSY. Leprosy was a skin disease that EATS AWAY your skin and gives you huge SORES and it's very CONTAGIOUS. Those who were diagnosed with LEPROSY in Jesus' day were put together with other lepers in their own COMMUNE OUTSIDE the city limits. LEPERS were REQUIRED to SHOUT "UNCLEAN" so others would not come near them. Here is what HAPPENS when Jesus encounters a man who has been shunned by his family, friends and town ... **Luke 5:12-13 = ¹² In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. "Lord," he said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."** ¹³ **Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared.** ⁵

Jesus did NOT SHY AWAY from or IGNORE a PERSON who others had pushed away ... It says, **"Jesus reached out and TOUCHED him."** THAT'S PERSONAL! In order to LOVE people who are UNCLEAN, you might NEED to get DIRTY! #1 = Refuse to ignore ... #2 =

2. ASK what I can DO to meet the NEEDS

ASK what I can DO to meet the NEEDS ... It's NOT ENOUGH to RECOGNIZE people around me have NEEDS; I need to be WILLING to MEET NEEDS. There are times we SEE the NEED, BUT we CAN'T MEET the NEED ... BUT, there are other TIMES when we have the TIME and RESOURCES to make a huge DIFFERENCE, BUT we REFUSE. JESUS calls us to OPEN our HANDS and offer GENEROSITY / DIGNITY / HELP that might STRETCH us a bit.

This principle reminds me of a SCENE from one of my favorite Christmas movies of all time ... The BANK RUSH SCENE from **"It's a Wonderful Life"** ... when Mary offers their HONEYMOON MONEY to the people.

Jesus says in **Matthew 5:42 = ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.** ⁶ That's pretty CLEAR! GIVE to those who ASK ... ALL of them? Let ANYONE BORROW? Now, HEAR me ... You MUST be SMART about these things, but I'm afraid WAY TOO MANY of US are "SMART" and WAY too FEW are WILLING!

⁴ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Pr 14:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Lk 5:12-13). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁶ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 5:42). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Let me back this up with one more Scripture ... **Philippians 2:3-5 = ³ Don't be selfish, don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. ⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁷**

A FEW WAYS you can STOP being so SELFISH ... 1) GIVE MONEY when the timing is right. 2) Other times it is BETTER to Give FOOD or GAS and NOT MONEY. 3) DO NOT TELL them you will PRAY for them and that's the SUM of your PRAYER; ACTUALLY, PRAY for THEM and PLEAD with GOD to STEP IN! 4) GIVE your TIME!

These are ways we can MEET NEEDS as GOD LEADS ... people are hurting... #3 =

3. COOPERATE With OTHERS to Meet LONG-TERM Needs

COOPERATE with OTHERS to Meet LONG-TERM Needs. I think we could AGREE, over a LONG PERIOD of time, a single PERSON'S CONTRIBUTIONS to a CAUSE, will probably NOT SUSTAIN that cause. It's DIFFICULT as an INDIVIDUAL to make a LARGE, LONG-TERM IMPACT on CHANGING the WORLD. BUT when we team up...

I LOVE seeing people around BMZ TEAM UP to do PROJECTS ... DINNERS, SET UP or TEAR DOWN or DECORATING or FOOD PANTRY or GROWTH GROUP PROJECTS or MISSION TRIPS. It's INCREDIBLE to see what ALL can be ACCOMPLISHED by a TEAM!

In his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians Paul WRITES about WORKING TOGETHER to make a DIFFERENCE ... **2 Corinthians 9:9 = ⁹ As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." ⁸ Did you CATCH THAT? JESUS REMEMBERS when we DO THINGS for the POOR! Paul is WRITING to his FRIENDS in CORINTH to raise MONEY for him to TAKE to the believers in Jerusalem. Many BELIEVERS are living in POVERTY, being PERSECUTED by the ROMANS and PAUL wants to ENCOURAGE those who are HURTING by PARTNERING with HIM to HELP the BELIEVERS in JERUSALEM ... LONG-TERM. Paul goes on... **2 Corinthians****

9:10-11 = ¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹ Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. ⁹

Guess what? Paul just DESCRIBED GOD'S ECONOMY! When you live OPEN-HANDED and NOT CLOSE-HANDED, you will be BLESSED! Can't explain it ...

I CAN'T IMAGINE our CONGREGATIONS in SOUTHWEST Wisconsin having the OPPORTUNITIES we've had over the past few years without INTERHOPE Missions. HOW MANY of YOU would have DONE good MINISTRY to ORPHANS in SOUTHEAST ASIA ... India, Cambodia and Burma IF we had NOT partnered with INTERHOPE? MORE on that in a MINUTE ... #3 = COOPERATE with OTHERS to meet LONG-TERM NEEDS ... #4 =

4. FOCUS on ETERNITY

If WE, as FOLLOWERS of JESUS and as a CHURCH are going to GIVE to people in NEED a GIFT worth OPENING BEFORE CHRISTMAS ... ETERNITY better be INVOLVED!

Please, let's NOT FORGET WHY we EXIST as CHURCH. Yes, we HELP people PHYSICALLY / EMOTIONALLY / RELATIONALLY as OFTEN as POSSIBLE, but we are NOT a SOCIAL AGENCY; we are CHURCH! We are FOLLOWERS whom JESUS COMMISSIONED to GO into ALL the WORLD and MAKE DISCIPLES for HIM! We SERVE people's IMMEDIATE NEEDS, so they TRUST US to GUIDE THEM in their ETERNAL

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Php 2:3-5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁸ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Co 9:9). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Co 9:10-11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

NEEDS! Paul writes to the CHURCH in Colossae ... **Colossians 3:2 = ² Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.**¹⁰ In ALL we do here at BMZ, we MUST keep THIS FOCUS.

EVERYTHING we DO at BMZ is about The Great COMMISSION of going OUT and MAKING DISCIPLES! What we are doing right NOW in WORSHIP is MISSION! We HOPE and PRAY someone gives their LIFE to Jesus Christ TODAY and WORKS at GROWING in their FAITH and as a DISCIPLE ... I hope all of us have a renewed desire to be more who God wants us to be!

As we get CLOSE to CHRISTMAS, let me REMIND US of what JESUS SAID in the Sermon on the MOUNT ... **Matthew 6:19-21 = ¹⁹ "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**¹¹

THIS CHRISTMAS, I CHALLENGE you to CONSIDER GIVING as much to JESUS as you GIVE to your FAMILY! I WONDER what you could TEACH your FAMILY about JESUS and SELFISHNESS, etc. IF you DID GIVE in a DIFFERENT WAY this CHRISTMAS...

Where are the DESIRES of your HEART? Are you living OPEN-HANDED or CLOSE-HANDED? If you don't want to give INTERNATIONALLY, Please give to our FOOD PANTRY / BLESSINGS in a BAG / SNACK SACKS / GIVING TREES, etc. and/or GIVE to BMZ CHURCH as your home church so we can continue the mission here in Grant and Crawford Counties and across Wisconsin.

We have work we've been called to do, and it includes the NEEDY this Christmas! *INTERHOPE... Stan, I wanted to share some thoughts about this video. I woke up this morning praying for the Lord's wisdom about it and praying for the BMZ holiday events and all involved. The video was mostly finished yesterday, but I was asking the Lord for wisdom about it. The first thing I did this morning was watch the previous 7 videos I sent you. I noticed that in several of those, we opened with footage from the garbage dumps. I'm not sure if you are aware, but that is really where we started our mission way back in St Vincent. A little boy died--was hit by a garbage truck while picking in the trash and because we knew him, and he had no other known family they called me in to identify the body.*

His name was Georgie. He was a sweet kid and he never asked me for anything, though I tried to make sure he had enough to eat whenever I could find him. I agonized as to why we couldn't help him... it brought on a faith crisis that eventually led me to see we had to develop homes for kids like Georgie--a roof, a bed, a kitchen table, loving parental figures. Even an orphanage--admittedly an imperfect solution--is better than what happened to Georgie. This was the understanding I came to at the time as I prayed for God's wisdom... and release from the guilt I felt for not being able to help him. I remember it like it was yesterday. A very painful, but ultimately redemptive experience.

This was one of those "hinges" upon which our lives and callings swing-- everything changed for me at that time and I had clarity about what we should do. Years later, when we first started work in Cambodia, it was the garbage dump that we concentrated on. Our kids come from many kinds of distress, but Americans have a hard time picturing brothels or sweatshops, but everyone knows what a garbage dump is. When you only have a few minutes to communicate a message, it is powerful because it most clearly represents the great transformation--both physical and spiritual--experienced by our kids.

¹⁰ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Col 3:2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

¹¹ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Mt 6:19-21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Psalm 30:11-12 Is the theme of this video and something I think about whenever I am with our kids in their children's homes. Psalm 30:11-12 = "You have turned my mourning into dancing for me; You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,¹² That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever."

Remember how some of the old holiness folks had a problem with dancing? They believed that dancing was "unholy". Try telling that to a church full of orphans who have been saved from a garbage dump, among many other unthinkable places. Their sadness was uttermost, but it has been turned to dancing by the Lord. There is so much joy in that.

Let's WATCH...

Let's Pray!

Next Steps: *Memorize Matthew 25:40*
Read Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount) and Matthew 25
Refuse to ignore "the least of these"
Show I Care for Those in Need by supporting orphans in SE Asia

Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!

In a moment, we are going to

- RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time
- to finish COMPLETING any information
- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket. YEP ... BOTH in the SAME BASKET!!

IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today

- We are so glad that you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.

It's a book called "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is DROP your COMPLETED Connection Card
- in the OFFERING PLATE / BASKET WITH your OFFERING when it's passed. YEP ... BOTH in the SAME BASKET!

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As our ushers GET READY to come forward

- I just want to remind you that ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND, it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... 2 Corinthians 9:10 = *10 For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.*
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the 1st place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And, GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- Next Week: "**SHOWING I CARE FOR GOD'S WORLD!**"
- AFTER OFFERING: SONG (Live) / PRAYER (Live)

"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."
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