

The past 10 days have been so exciting for me. I got to go to the joint annual meeting last weekend and Judy did a great job filling in for me. I got to listen to it on my drive back. Yes, I got to drive back because I got to go to Omaha. You know, usually you think you get to go to all these great and wonderful places for these meetings. And I got to go to Omaha, but it's okay. Yesterday, I had another conference, and I went with Pastor Don from St. John's. And it was another one where we got to drive back because we went to Perry. So you always think you get to go to these wonderful places, but Perry actually was really great. It was a great opportunity because we got to spend time talking with people about a collective group here in Des Moines metro, called Amos And Don and I were driving back. We're talking about what we did and what we talked about in that meeting because we all got split in separate groups. And one of the things that we talked about was we went to a little group called House Gatherings. And so we paired off in about five groups of five people, and we talked about what keeps us up at night. I see a lot of looks, a lot of panicked looks on faces. We're not going to do that today. I've already been told we got a lot on the calendar so I have to keep everything very short today. We'll see how that goes. But no, we don't have to break into these groups.

But it was great because Don and I were talking. On our way back, he told me, what keeps him up at night? He talked about concerns that he has for his church. And I looked at him and I said, Don, I have the same concerns for your church. And he stopped and he looked at me, and he was surprised. Because why would I be concerned about his church? I got enough going on here. But it's important. It's important to think about our neighbors. It's important to think about everybody else and not just ourselves. We've done a great job, the past year and a half, going through, Outreach and reaching out to people who need our help. We've done a fantastic job with that.

We actually got talked about at both of our meetings on the work that we've done here with feeding the kids. We were made examples for the, for the groups, which really surprised me because I was not expecting that. But that's one thing that we do here. We take care of others, we take care of ourselves, and we help out everyone that we can. We spend a great amount of time doing that.

Today's reading is about Passover. That seems kind of different. Seems a little bit different than taking care of each other. When I grew up as a kid, you know, every Holy Week you would see the Ten Commandments with Charlton Heston on TV. And there was a scene in that where they were going over Passover. And you saw the angel, the cloud come through, walk up, go up to a house, and see the blood on the door. And then all of a sudden you would keep going on. And what I always thought during that time was, why? If it's an angel of God, then he should know, or she should know that somebody in that house is Jewish. They shouldn't need the markers because they know

everything. So why did God tell Moses to tell everyone what that marker on the door? And that bothered me for about 40 years?

Driving back with Don yesterday, I started to think about that again. Why did God make a point to tell Moses to tell everybody to do that? I started to think about the rest of that reading. Why are you spending so much time focusing on how to make the lamb? Why are they spending so much time focusing on how they should eat it; what they should be wearing during this time? And I thought about it and I thought God isn't telling them this, and he's very specific, obvious things. He's telling him because he knows they're gonna have to leave. They're gonna have to leave fast. When the angel comes through Egypt and starts killing everything and everyone Pharaoh, it's very angry. Wouldn't we all if you're in that spot? We get pretty hot too.

So it made sense to me, why he told them to cook it like that. You have less cleanup. That's the old restaurant guy can be coming out making sure the cleanup's done and you can get out of the business fast. They're dressed. They're ready to go. They have everything packed. Everything they need to carry. They can run in an instance, notice and they can help everybody else in the community. Because as they're running down the streets escaping, they can see a house that has the blood on the door. And they know they can run up to that door and make sure everybody in the house gets out too. They're gonna help each other. Like we help each other.

God gave them away. That they can recognize people that they don't know. Strangers they've never seen. People they've never met in their lives, but they know they have that commonality. They know they are God's children. Just like they are.

We can't tell simply by looking at people on the street whether they're God's children or not. We can't tell if they believe in Christ, if they're Islam, if they're Jewish, if they're Hindi. Doesn't matter. We don't know what they go through on a daily basis.

Today's world communion Sunday, all of us are getting together to celebrate communion together in Christianity. We're getting together to celebrate and remember that Christ died for us. That's an easy thing for us to tell we can drive by any church today. We can see cars in front of it, and we'll know that people are there celebrating the same things.

Today is also Neighbors in Need, for United Church of Christ. We take a special offering and we give it to people who need it. And today, we're recognizing mental health. We're trying to get mental health awareness out to people who need it. We can walk up and down the street and we don't know what somebody's going through on a day-to-day basis. We don't know how their mental health is.

On Friday well, Wednesday actually, We had preacher Sam from the Church of Christ come in and talk to our Morning Bible study group. I'm excited for this week because we're going to talk about it. And I'm going to get what they thought about it Because I know what I thought about him talking about because that church is so different than us. Well, Sam and I, we meet every other week for coffee. And this week

we are talking and I thought we were making great headway because of a lot of what I believe. I believe that God loves every one of us.

I believe that we are meant for a much bigger purpose than all the hate and anger in the world today. I believe that we should take care of each other. We should help one another, no matter what is going on. And talking with Sam about that, he believes that we should be unified too. And it was fantastic because we talked about having a worship service, where our two churches come together. My entire life, I never thought I would say that, from growing up in this community and what we've done with them over the years. And we started to talk about it, and I was excited. And then Sam started talking about why we can't do it. Why we aren't allowed in their church, but they can come to ours. Why they won't come in here, because our worship surface is different than theirs and a couple of other things I never knew like I know they don't have music during their singing during their hymns. I knew that'd be something that would be a thing between us.

Well, I found out some other ones that really surprised me. And the more we talked, the more I started to get sad, and I started to get depressed. I'm like, we started a conversation. We are trying to help each other out. We're trying to find a commonality. Each time was no because of this and no because of this.

And then I got a text. I got a text from Dualla and just out of nowhere she tells me hey, remember God has a plan for all of us and he loves you. And I needed that at that moment in time, because I was feeling so beat down. That simple, little text changed my attitude for the rest of the day. Change my attitude for the rest of the weekend. It was like Dualla was walking past our house and saw the blood on my door that I needed help that day, even though she wasn't there.

We all have blood on our door. We all have those little moments where we need help but we don't know how to ask for it. We all have an opportunity. We can come together and help somebody else. Remember, it's the little things that we do in life. It's the little things when we just share God's love with other people that we don't think it's going to make that big of an impact, but it can. It really can. We don't know the struggles that we all face that others face. But we do know that you can make a difference simply by saying h, by giving a smile, patting somebody on the back, telling them they did a good job. We're simply reminding you that God has a plan even though we don't know it. Let us pray.