

This week, I've spent a lot of time talking about perspective, talking with different people about how they perceive things to be compared to how I perceive things to be. And I was meeting with two pastors this week, and the first one was very proud. He was ecstatic. He was so happy with the way things are going in his church right now. And I'm like, okay, well that's great. You're so happy; why are you so happy? And he says everything is going perfectly. I am like, well, there's no such thing as that, so there's got to be something wrong. He's like, no, no, no. Everything is absolutely fantastic. My congregation is rallying together. They're putting up signs, they're promoting these things, they're talking to the representatives, their Congress people. They're being active. They have other groups coming in and using our facility that are going to be doing good for the community. We are fantastic. I am like good for you.

And we're talking with another pastor, and he just looks sad. The more and more the other pastor is happy and just reveling in his greatness. The other Pastor looks sad, and he looks sadder with each word he says. I said how's your week going? And he said, well, not good. My congregation is split. My congregation is promoting hate and fear, and we have members of our congregation that aren't coming to church anymore because they're afraid of other members of the congregation. He's like and I don't know what to do. I don't know how to make those people feel safe. I don't know how to tell the people that are promoting this behavior that they're wrong. I'm afraid that if I do anything, it's going to split the church and we're not going to have a church to go back to.

So I turned to the other pastor and I said, okay you are doing such a great job, help him. He's like well I can't help him. I'm like, why can't you help him? He's like cuz that's not happening at our church. We're all promoting hate. We're all promoting, we're doing great things in the community by not letting those people come to our church. He's like the president of our faith, our denomination, sided against inclusion. So, you should be having a great time too.

Like that's the difference in perspective. The one pastor is happy that they're promoting hate. The other pastor is sad because even one person getting hurt is too much for him to handle. It's a world that we all live in right now. We have different points of perspective. I said that our president of the UCC is promoting exclusion right now. And she is. She's promoting it because she respects our policy that each church gets to decide its own fate. We get to decide who we are, what we stand for. What we represent.

There are churches in the UCC that are very liberal And decisive upon one point. We have churches in the UCC that are on the exact opposite end, and they promote exclusion. They promote Christian nationalism. But we're all under the UCC umbrella. We all have our own ideas of who we are, And what we represent.

When people tell me that they don't like our church because we're liberal, I asked them how do you know that? Have you come to our church? Do you know anybody at our church besides me? And most of the time, both those answers are, no. I have other people that love our church because we are incredibly liberal. And to them, I say, have you been to our church? Do you know any of our members besides me? And they say, no.

I do not consider myself very liberal on the far extreme that many people believe that the UCC faith is. I do not think I am the most liberal person in this room. I don't think I'm even halfway in or the liberal part of this room. But it's perspective. People see what they want to see.

In today's reading, the Pharisee was talking about the woman who was with him. The woman who was there Anointing Jesus who is so proud of her love and devotion for him and for God, that she was blessing him the whole time he was there. But the Pharisee was offended that she was there. And first, it got me thinking. I'm like, why is this woman in your house if you think she's a sinner so bad? If you think there's no point of her being saved, why is she there? I don't have that answer. I've been looking for a week and I cannot find why this woman was in this house for any reason other than the approval point. But the Pharisee had already made up his mind on this woman. He's given up on her. Everything she has done. He's like, nope, she's past saving. She's past forgiveness. I don't know why Jesus is wasting his time with her.

Hey, you don't have to answer this question. When you heard the scripture reading, What did you think her sin was? What did you think when DeDe said she was a sinner? I know what I thought. My first thought was that she was a prostitute, because that's what we see so many times in the Bible. The Pharisees are upset at Jesus because he's hanging out with tax collectors and prostitutes. That's my perspective. The more I reflect on it this week, the more I realized there are 613 sins in the Old Testament. She could have made soup on the Sabbath and given it to somebody. And that's a sin. She could have taken care and helped somebody that fell down walking upstairs on the Sabbath, and that's a sin.

I instantly went to the worst thing I could think of and actually I can take a worse things, but that's the one that I went to because that's my perspective. I don't know. This woman I don't know what she's done or what she hasn't done.

I can sit here every day and think I'm such a good person because I do these good things, but I can't get past my own perspective to see the best in somebody else Like Jesus does. This woman did everything she could for Jesus. Not for the Pharisee. Not necessarily for herself. She did what she could for him to reinforce that love. And my first thought was that she's a terrible person. I do see that Jesus saved her. I do see that he forgave her sins. I do see that she's grateful because she recognizes the fact that she has sinned. She's asking for forgiveness. She's looking for hope and she's finding it through him.

I know I was that person. I know I was a severe drunk. I know that I have a lot of emotional issues. I know that I did a lot of wrong things in my past, and I know every day I work to fix them. I work every day to make myself a better person. I work every day to change my perspective. I know that I do that Because of the love that I feel from God. I know that I have an opportunity that's been given to me. That I'm not going to waste again, just like the woman in the story today.

The Pharisee can't see past that. He sees that Jesus is making somebody better. He sees that the person who has sinned the most and has forgiven is going to be more grateful than the person who thinks they don't sin. We all sin. 613 sins in the Old Testament, we're always going to sin. But if we live by the two big ones, the two Commandments that Jesus told us: Love God above all others and to treat your neighbor as yourself. Those are the two simplest rules we can have. But we forget that second one so often. We forget that second one because it's not always in our perspective.

For humans, we do the best we can every day and that's all we can ask for. We just ask to change that perspective a little bit. So instead of seeing it through our eyes, we see everyone through Jesus's eyes, and that will make us all a little happier. Let us pray.