

I'm going to start off today with telling all of you something you don't know. I have a lot of meetings during the week. (I about got hit from the back row there.) I know you all know that you know that I'm very busy. You know that I go, and I try to share God's love everywhere and reflect this church the best way that I can.

I started off this week in a meeting talking about the fires in Western Nebraska and Western South Dakota, now, Colorado's having to evacuate. And while we're talking about it, and how we can help as a church, the big church, a couple people in this group say, well, we're not there, not our problem. Tuesday, I'm in, another meeting, and I'm talking with a pastor up in Northeast Iowa, and we're talking about the fire in Postville 600 people lost their jobs because the meat packing plant burned down. They're not sure how that community is going to survive from this. And as we're talking about it, somebody interrupts us and says, well, we're not in Iowa, let's move the conversation on. That's not our problem. Wednesday, I'm talking about something else. Same thing happens. Somebody says, well, that doesn't concern me. I'm not worried about it. Let's move on to something else. This happens all week long.

Friday, sitting in this big meeting, And we're talking about Amos. We're talking about the five points, and each point somebody says, well, that doesn't concern me. I think we've talked enough about this at that point. Finally, I lost it. They said it during public education because they don't have kids in school. He said it about immigration because they don't have to worry about having a job. They said it during the EMS service because they live in the metro, so they're not worried. And then finally, when we got to the park, we were talking about silver alert, one person, and these are all pastors. It's not lay people. It's all pastors. One of them says my grandparents died a long time ago. And finally, I'm like, okay, how old are you?

He's like, what difference does that make? I'm like it makes a big difference. He's like I'm 67. You got grandkids? Well yeah. You don't think that's going to be you? You don't think you're not going to be the one that's lost one day, and all of us don't have to care about it because my grandparents are dead. Well, no, that's different. Like, okay, tell me where it says in Matthew that it's okay to only help the sick if they're your friends. Take care of the stranger if you know them. Any of that? Tell me, where does it say in the Bible we only have to care if it directly relates to us because eventually it's going to directly relate to us.

We can think about it right now that we have a great, wonderful life. We have our house. We have food on the table. Sometimes we're way too hot in rooms. But we all have a very nice life. Yes, there are many things that we could wish for. There are many things that we wish could be stronger or better. Our health could be better. We know that. But what right does that give us to stop caring about everybody else?

Today's reading our Psalms tells us how great God is, tells us that created everything. God is all around us because God is in everything. We know that. We know that because we were created by this great loving force that we will always be protected. We know that through our faith in God, things will always work out. We don't necessarily understand how or when or why, because I hear that a lot, too.

I was talking with a woman this week, and she was mad at God. And I told her, I'm, like, I don't know anybody who doesn't get mad at God at some point. We don't understand what happens in our lives, so we instantly, some of us turn and get mad at God for whatever happens. She was telling me that she was mad at God because God liked her better as a drug addict than he likes her being sober. And that's a hard thing to hear. It's a hard thing to say. I

asked her why, why do you think that? She said well, when I was a drug addict I have four kids. Each one of those kids turned out normal. Is having a successful life. It's like when I got sober, I had a fifth kid and the fifth kid wasn't normal. This kid has a few abnormalities. I go, why do you think God doesn't like you sober? She's like, well, if God likes me sober. God would make the fifth kid the same as the rest.

That's not how things work. God doesn't punish us, doesn't punish others because there's something we've done or we haven't done. God isn't there to do that. God is there to give you the strength to get through that. to get through the opportunities in our lives, to get through the daily hassles, the daily headaches.

I'm not happy that I walk with a cane now. I don't blame God for that. I also don't ask God to fix it. I probably should. Because I think God gives me the strength to get through each day. more and more. It is in a relationship where we go back and forth, and I'm like, God, I'm going to go to these churches this week. I'm going to help these people because you fixed my leg. You fixed my back, I might go to those churches. I'm going to help these people, no matter what. That's , what God intends for us to do. That's what the Bible tells us to do. That's what today's reading tells us to do. That God gives us the strength to go out and share and talk about their love for us, their understanding of us.

The story tells us about a great place where everything is perfect. Where everything is glorious and wonderful. We know that God created that. We know that that place is heaven. We know that when the time comes, all of our questions will be answered. All will be right.

I always wonder, what am I going to look like when I get there? Is it going to be the me when I was 22? Is it going to be the me now? Is it going to be the me later? Does it matter? I don't think it does. I think what matters is that, I know, I have enough faith in God to know that there is going to be a time when I will be there. When I won't be in pain. When the people that I care about won't be suffering. When the people that I don't know will no longer be suffering. When kids will have food to eat, and people won't be getting sick. When our water is safe to drink. I know that one day that will happen because I have faith in God. In a God that loves us for who we are. A God that loves us for what we do, and that we don't need to barter. That we don't need to focus solely on our daily selves, because that's not what the Bible tells us.

The strength that God gives us to help one another. The strength that God gives us to know that there is a better life. That there's a better time for us is there. It is wonderful, and all we need to do is stop worrying. Stop worrying about the daily routines. Stop worrying about how we will be better than somebody else. We're all God's children. We're all a part of God's great and wonderful creation. That's what's important. To know that we have strength because they gave it to us. Their love empowers us.

Let us pray.