

*Kingdom Allegiance: Faithful To Jesus In Our Political Age*

So, this morning, we're continuing our Faith in Politics series. I want to provide two disclaimers at the beginning of each week of this series. The first is that I know many of you will vote for Donald Trump this coming November, and others of you will vote for Kamala Harris this November. However you vote, you are so welcome here. We are called to be beyond the divisions that take place within our world.

The second disclaimer dovetails off the first. It is a conviction of mine that the Church of Jesus Christ does not land on or is not defined by any side of a political left or political right continuum; rather, the church transcends these categories. It's a species of its own kind. It's something that confounds both the left and the right. It's a conviction of mine that the world should look at us and say, "Who in the world are these people?" We don't seem to fit neatly and nicely into the categories that people are so familiar with—othering people and placing them into these diminished areas.

So for these three weeks, as we're looking at these two topics, we're exploring not how to vote, not how to engage, but rather what does it look like for us to be faithful to the way of Jesus?

In our political age, because the temptations in this realm are significant and it can be easy for us to get detoured and caught up in these secondary allegiance issues, things that are not to take the place of our ultimate allegiance to Jesus. I also recognize that this topic is emotionally charged. Voting has consequences. All these different things have an impact on our daily lives.

Have you lost anyone recently? I don't mean physically, I don't mean a tragic passing or a death, but have you lost someone to the culture war? Maybe a friend, a relative, brother, sister, coworker, neighbor, or spouse. Just the other day, I was talking to my therapist, as I promised I would through this series in particular, and he was commenting about how him and others at his practice have counseled many people four years ago through an election cycle, couples who were contemplating divorce over political differences.

I, as a pastor, have had folks seek prayer and advice on what to do. They feel like they are losing their friend, sibling, or whoever it is. These divides run deep in our country. I've watched people leave this church because we weren't conservative enough on this issue or progressive enough on that one, or we didn't talk out loudly enough on an issue, and that grieves my heart.

A few stats: 60 percent of voters think that members of the other party constitute a threat to America. Forty percent of that 60 percent would call those other members of that other party evil. One in three people who identify as either Republican or Democrat actually believe that violence could be justified to advance their party's platform. In 2020, the

Pew Research Group found that the month before the election, roughly eight in 10 registered voters in both camps said their differences with the other side were about core American values, and roughly nine in 10 again in both camps worried that a victory by the other would lead to lasting harm in the United States.

We are living through the age of culture war. Deep entrenchment and suspicion of the other side is the air that we breathe. Here's one definition of culture war I found this week. A culture war is a cultural conflict between social groups and the struggle for dominance of their values, beliefs, and practices.

Have you lost anyone in the past few years? These divisions have a long history within our country. They seemed to have hit a fever pitch in the summer of 2020. We were months upon months into the COVID-19 lockdowns. Cultural tempers were hot with aggression. The fallout around the tragic killing of George Floyd was raging, and riots and protests were taking place all across our screens seemingly nightly.

On top of that, you had the contentious 2020 election. I mean, for all intents and purposes, that was the moment in which our country seemed to be hanging on by a thread. There was a poisonous cocktail between the isolation from the pandemic, racial tensions, political hostility, and throw in a dash of natural disasters. It produced a toxic environment in which depression was just bubbling beneath the surface. We live in an age of the culture war, so it came as quite a surprise on that day on August 14, 2020, when a cultural phenomenon took place—*Ted Lasso*.

*Ted Lasso* aired right in the midst of this cultural milieu. This simple show came on, and if you haven't seen it, it's worth watching. It's basically about this woman who just went through a nasty divorce and got custody of a British football club. So, in an attempt to get back at her ex-husband, she hires an American football coach to take over and lead the charge of a British football club. She thought this was going to derail and go poorly, and it would corrupt the thing that her ex-husband loved.

However, *Ted Lasso*, played by Jason Sudeikis, was shockingly kind and whimsical. There was something about his sunny optimism and faith in silliness and whimsy as a social lubricant that would ease the tensions into which he stepped. There was something about his openness, his unshakable kindness, that turned the fortune around for the failing soccer club.

What was interesting about this show, in that particular moment, was that every time you thought the show would descend into the typical dog-eat-dog revenge, it resisted the urge in the midst of a hostile world. We were all locked up, and this show came on. It was dedicated to the possibility of forgiveness in the whimsy of kindness. It was the show's humanity and realism that caught the attention of our nation. And the

popularity was enormous. Just within its first season, *Ted Lasso* was nominated for 20 Primetime Emmy Awards, winning seven of them. In total, the show was nominated for 61 Primetime Emmys. On top of that, three SAG Awards, five Directors Guild Awards, two Golden Globes, and seven Critic Choice Awards.

The show interrupted the angst and pain in which we were experiencing. Listen to the way one columnist wrote a reflection on the show. "Little wonder that we fell in love with a television series in which bad behavior is almost always motivated by some hidden, healable pain. One in which selfishness and vindictiveness rarely reflect the full sum of someone's character, and forgiveness liberates the forgiven and the forgiver alike.

Watching the show, it begins to seem like not such a great stretch to imagine that we, too, are capable of making allowances for one another. That we, too, are capable of learning to play as a team. We watched Ted Lasso and began to wonder if maybe we didn't have to hate each other after all.

On one level, the show is far from Christian. It's built on a whole different worldview. One that's still dependent on self-fulfillment and off-color hedonism in which you find your meaning. But at a deeper level, the show is profoundly Christian, making commitments to reconciliation, forgiveness, grace, and humility. It's these overriding themes that seem to project the show into the very heart of our country and offer a different way.

I just wonder, as we continue this sermon series, what it means to be Christian in the world today. Maybe we're offered a choice between the energy of a Ted Lasso or that of the culture war. What does it mean to be Christian in the world? Does it mean to win at all costs? Does it mean we seek victory through dominance? It's this possibility of a different way that we are called to exemplify for the world around us. Maybe that's what faithfulness to Jesus may look like at this particular time.

In your Bibles, turn to Mark 10. We are diving right into the middle of the Gospel of Mark. Here we see Jesus, who is on his way to Jerusalem, which is Mark's code language for he's on his way to his death.

**They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." Mark 10:32-34**

Now, as I mentioned, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. This is the epicenter of his life. It's where he's life will be taken as he just described. But what's happening beneath the surface of the disciples is they're also recognizing that Jerusalem is the place where revolution takes place. This is where Jesus brings the fullness of the kingdom of God. This is when all of their hopes for change were bubbling up to the surface.

But this is not the first time that Jesus has predicted his death. This is, in the Gospel of Mark, the end of three predictions in the past two chapters where Jesus taught his disciples that he would go to Jerusalem and be killed. But it seems here, just like it did in the previous two times, that Jesus' teaching goes in one ear and out the other.

In Mark 8, Jesus does this same thing. That time though Peter pulled Jesus aside and rebuked him. He told Jesus that this was not the way the kingdom was established. That's not the way the kingdom of God was going to be fulfilled. Jesus, after hearing this rebuke from Peter, has strong words and says, "Get behind me, Satan." He calls that move a demonic urge within Peter. Then he gives this teaching. "*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me'*" (Mark 8:34).

Mark 9 is the second of Mark's predictions in which Jesus teaches the disciples that this is the way of the kingdom of God. He gives this in Mark 9:30-35, and the disciples miss it again. They begin to argue about who's the greatest. Jesus teaches them anyone who wants to be the first must be the very last and the servant of all.

Then we arrive here at Mark 10, the text I just read; Jesus is teaching them that this is the way the kingdom operates. Let's look at verse 35 and see how the disciples respond. "*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask'*" (v. 35). Oh man. Have you ever been here? Maybe you have not explicitly prayed that, but if you're like me, there are times in which that is in you. Jesus, we want you to do whatever we ask. "*What do you want me to do for you?' He asked*" (v. 36). A stunning reply by Jesus for the record.

**They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" vv. 37-38**

Jesus responds and actually entertains their request and says, what do you want me to do for you? And they pull back into the very same categories that we're quite familiar with. There's the healthy impulse, but they didn't have the imagination for what Jesus had just taught three times. The way of the kingdom is through the cross. There is no crown without a cross. They don't get that. They want to be just like all the others who received their glory.

Now, we don't have time to get into it, but those two illusions of the cup and the baptism, if you trace the theme throughout the scriptures, are about suffering. He is saying, "Will you take up the cup of suffering? Will you be baptized in such a way that you will experience the suffering that I will experience? You don't know what you are asking." It reminds me of earlier in Mark 8.

**"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain**

**the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? Mark 8:34b-37**

The heart of following Jesus is not about ascension to the highest places of power, but rather, Jesus said, "If you are to follow me, the path is denial and taking up a cross." And then that haunting line, "What good is it if you gain everything you're after and yet you lose your soul?" What good is it if you get everything you want, including your political agenda and your candidate? You get everything you desire, but somewhere along the way, you have to forfeit your soul. What good is it?

**"We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." Mark 10:39-40**

Jesus is alluding to the fact that after his death and resurrection, they do figure it out, and the fate of all the disciples is essentially martyrdom—the way of the cross. He's saying they will, in fact, suffer. They don't know it at the time, but he's pointing to that reality. Look down at verse 41. *"When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John" (v. 41).*

One note before we get too far: this isn't a righteous indignation. It'd be nice if that was the case. It's a jealous indignation. It's their thought that James and John asked him the question they wanted to ask. James and John beat them to Jesus. It speaks of something to the very impulse in all of us to say, "Lord, we want to sit at your right and your left when you come into your glory." Jesus called the disciples together and had a teaching moment.

**Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45**

Jesus understands what is pulsing beneath all the disciples' hearts, and he pulls them together for a discussion. Jesus then contrasts the kingdom of this world versus the kingdom of God. He says that there are two ways to operate within the world. The first one is built on prestige, power, and influence. You see it right there. It says the prestige would let one of them sit at his right and the other at his left. The second way to operate within the world is organizing around power. Those who are regarded as the rulers of the Gentiles, lord it over them. And lastly, in a position of influence, their high officials exercise authority over them.

See, these positions of prestige, power, and influence are how change happens in the kingdom of the world, isn't it? It's the way you win culture wars. You get the right person to say the right things, who has the power and influence to impact people. And so, at all expenses, they feel

they must pursue prestige, power, and influence. This is just how the world works. Jesus says this is one way.

But there's that haunting line right in the middle of that transition line in which he says, "Not so with you." In the Greek, it's actually more definitive. It's more like, "It is not so with you." The reason that it is important is because Jesus is saying, "Remember, the kingdom of heaven is here." He's announced it. He's inaugurated its presence. He says that for those living in the kingdom of God, it is not the way of power, prestige, and influence. There's an altogether different way of showing up in the world. It's the way, not of these things, but look at this counter list that I believe Jesus presents in his teaching.

It's not prestige; it's service. Whoever wants to become great must be your servant. It's not power over, but it's to become a slave of all. Whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. It's not influence, but it's cruciform love. Even the Son of Man gave his life as a ransom for many. The contrast of the kingdom of God is a way in which Jesus literally inverts everything we know about influence and status in the kingdom of this world.

It's not prestige, it's not power, and it's not influence. It's through two metaphors, servant and slave. And the third metaphor is his very life. The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. So, the way of the kingdom is completely opposite to the way we influence the world around us. It's a counter backward way of the kingdom in which we don't achieve the things we want through dominance but through service.

It's not power over, but it's what Jesus exemplifies on the cross as a power under which, through service, he subverts the systems and the powers of the world around us. It's not through culture warring, it's through something altogether different. What I would summarize as cruciform love, or maybe an easier way to say it in one sentence, would be faithfulness to Jesus is the way of cruciform love.

I first read this word cruciform from a writer named Michael J. Gorman. He means conformity to the crucified Christ. And his work is really brilliant. He talks about how you see this all through the works of Paul. His argument is that the very existence of the Christian identity is that we are to be conformed to the crucified Christ.

In Philippians 1, you see this in Paul's writing when he says, *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (v.21).* A little bit later in Philippians 3, Paul writes, *"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead" (vv. 10-11).* Look at this in Colossians 1. Paul says, *"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church" (v. 24).*

One of the core themes that is within Paul's writing and his ministry is that we are to take on the same suffering as Christ. That is the identity of what it means to be Christian, to be so shaped by the love of Christ on the cross that it becomes the very way we interact in the world around us. Love your neighbor as yourself, Jesus would teach. How do you do

that? Well, when you are tired, you take a nap; when you're hungry, you get something to eat; when you're thirsty, you get something to drink. If we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, then we sacrifice in ways that when my neighbor is tired, we create the space for them to nap. We offer them food when they're hungry. We give them something to drink when they're thirsty.

At the core of the Christian life is self-sacrificial love, cruciform love. I'm guessing that you're wondering how it actually works. It doesn't gain traction in the world. We couldn't possibly live that way and win elections. We couldn't possibly have our identity be this cruciform way of living because it's just not effective in this world.

I remember a Christian politician and pundit a few years ago who said that the stakes were too high. Turning the other cheek is just not sufficient anymore. The problem becomes, do we trust the very teachings of Jesus when he says the kingdom of heaven is here? He is saying that there is a way to live right now in that world, which is coming to fruition. The gates of hell will not stop that world from coming to be. We know where this is going, but do we trust that forgiveness is better than revenge and anger?

Do we trust that it's better to give than to receive? Do we trust that turning the other cheek is, in fact, the path towards reconciliation? Do we trust that the first will be last? Do we trust that loving our enemies is better than conquering and hating our enemies? Because here's where the rubber meets the road. The reality is if you're trying to build a kingdom of this world, you're right. Jesus' teachings will not work because Jesus is not building that kingdom. But Jesus is establishing a different kingdom.

Our social imaginations of the world and our lives have been too thoroughly shaped by the kingdoms of this world where the only resources we know what to work with are prestige, power, and influence. It happens in subtle ways. It certainly doesn't seem to be that the church can step into this moment with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. But rather out of either distrust or hope to expedite the process, we move toward it with what Paul calls the acts of the flesh, and we believe that hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy will bring about the things we desire.

If Jesus went to the cross and laid his life down as both the means for us to enter the kingdom of God and to exist and exemplify the kingdom of God, then there is no issue of such importance that we need to sacrifice the way of Jesus to accomplish it. If Jesus went to the cross, and that was the height of his ministry, there would be no issue for which we need to get off of our crosses to solve. If we get to the place where we believe that it is so important for us to solve an issue that we have to stop being Christian, we've lost the plot.

The ends and the means always are working together. The kingdom of God will not come about through means other than the way of Jesus. Eugene Peterson riffs on that line, and he says, "It's the way of Jesus plus the truth of Jesus that brings about the life of Jesus." And all too

often, we become guilty of taking up the tools of the culture around us, of the kingdom of this world. Rather than developing the slow, tedious suffering type of work, the cruciform way of living, we get distorted and try to bring about good things. But we must marry our good intentions with the teachings of Jesus that say it is better to serve than to be served, for the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.

Dan White Jr. wrote in his book, *Love Over Fear*, "When you live in Culture War mode, there is always a battle to fight, a side to take, and people to fear. When you live in God's kingdom, there is always a stranger to welcome, a neighbor to befriend, and an enemy to love." So the allure of the culture war is that it seems like we could achieve success if we only conquer, and then we could get there, but not so with you. We get mixed up in our mission, thinking that we are the ones establishing the kingdom of God instead of just living into that reality here and now. Jesus has established that kingdom. It's here. Our role is not to build it out; it's to exist within it. Brian Zahnd, writes,

**History often unfolds in ways that are as awful as they are inexorable. Thus, it behooves us to remember that we're not called to change the world. (We cannot bear that kind of pressure). Our task is more modest: to simply be that part of the world already changed by Christ. Zahnd**

Our task is to exemplify and embody the alternative way. God has established that kingdom here and now, and our task is not to change the world. That's too lofty. Our task is to be faithful to the world in which Jesus has already changed. The kingdom of God is here. It is present. Our opportunity is to live into that reality here and now. One more quote from an author, Stanley Hauerwas.

**However, the first task of the church is not to supply theories of governmental legitimacy or even to suggest strategies for social betterment. The first task of the church is to exhibit in our common life the kind of community possible when trust, and not fear, rules our lives. Hauerwas, A Community of Character**

The first task of the church is to be the church, to exist in ways that exemplify the teachings of Jesus, confounding left and right, and rather taking on the responsibility of saying there is a new way possible. We welcome you into the community, where we can learn how to do that.

In a few weeks, we're launching the practice of hospitality, where we'll spend a year as a community trying to figure out what it means to love the other. Hospitality, at its core, is basically turning enemies into neighbors and neighbors into family. As the family of God, that's what we do. Across all these differences, we embody a different way. Sometimes, in our haste, we want to bring about good things, and I really mean that, we descend into means other than the way of Jesus, and it ultimately corrupts it.

If Jesus could go to the cross and call us to do the same, then that's our task. But it is so backward to what we understand about the world because it's an altogether different kingdom. The kingdom of the world

does not operate in that way. It doesn't operate through weakness; it operates through power. We get caught assuming that same reality.

**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate. Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish in the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. 1 Corinthians 1:17-25**

Do we trust in the foolishness that appears to the world, the foolishness of God, or do we trust our own strength? It isn't about detachment and being removed from the world, but it's about remaining faithful to a teaching that seems so foolish in this world. You do not accomplish things through weakness, but it is at the point of weakness that Jesus says that is his greatest strength; it's foolishness to the world, but the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

So what does this look like in practice? What does it mean when we're supposed to approach the ballot box in November? What does it mean for how we show up in the world as Christians? I want to offer three reflections to help navigate this particular season.

### **Faithfulness Over Effectiveness**

The first one is that we need to focus on faithfulness over effectiveness. We've too often been shaped by our witness in the world to think that it must be effective to be the right thing. But if we're through the lens of the world, then the way of cruciform love, of self-sacrificing love will not be effective to establish the kingdom of God if we're marinated in the kingdom of this world.

Rather, our task is, like Jesus looked said to the disciples, there's this way of the kingdom of the world, but not so with you. Our task is not to look at what would be effective in accomplishing the things of God, but rather what the faithful way of Jesus is.

We will let him deal with the effectiveness. Because what we recognize is the gates of hell will not stand against it. That God is, in fact, establishing his church. When we're more shaped by the need for effectiveness, we think through the lens of the ends justify the means. But in the kingdom of God, the ends never justify means that are inconsistent with the way of Jesus.

I'm reminded of Martin Luther King, who said that you cannot use hate to rid the world of hate, only love can do that. When we fail to use the means faithful to the way of Jesus and consistent with the character of Jesus, which is the call on us, we fail to trust and believe that the kingdom of God is an actual reality that is present. Instead, we tend to resort into that prestige-power influence realm.

It plays out in subtle ways. It plays out much more in the way that we talk and speak with those we disagree with. It takes place more in the ways that we allow our minds to be filtered by anger and hatred. It comes out in the way that we speak to others. We don't turn the other cheek, but rather we dehumanize those who think differently than us and vote differently than us. We believe that if we just loathe them enough, then they'll change.

It's a fascinating strategy that corners of the church have where we hate the people we're trying to evangelize. I don't know how we think that's going to work, but we tend to descend into that. Dallas Willard once said, "There's nothing that can be done with anger that cannot be done better without it." It's worthy of our time to think through that. We pursue faithfulness over effectiveness. Our task is to be faithful to the way of Jesus.

### **Serve For The Good**

The second is what does this look like? This idea of cruciform love is we need to serve for the good. We need to vote, and then we need to serve for the good. One of the issues I find in our world is that we've bought the myth that voting is the height of our action in the world. I'd argue it's the most anemic way we can do any good in the world around us. That isn't to say it isn't important, but I think that, particularly for us sitting in this particular context in California, our vote, particularly for the presidential election, doesn't have all that much influence. Certainly, loving our neighbor may have more influence than that.

We tend to buy into the myth that this is the form of change we can engage with. But that's a myth. Action in life in the kingdom of God is marked by service. So we need to serve for the good, wherever we can find areas to take things into our own control, serve the orphan, the widow, the poor, be involved in our local community, get involved in our schools, and give and serve. Yes, then vote, but then get back to work, get back to serving. Our witness to the world around us is not dependent on who is in the office. Our witness is much more local. It's much more contextual. Love your neighbor, love your enemy.

A cruciform life is spent in service of others working for good. Of course, occasionally, you will engage in the systems of government, but participating in our culture is much more than that. A cruciform life will be far more marked by serving than it will be by voting. It doesn't abdicate our responsibility to vote, but we don't buy the myth. The way in which we engage in service, not voting records, is what we will be accountable for.

### **Serve In The Gaps**

The third task: I believe a cruciform life means that we confess our shortcomings and serve in the gaps. I believe that we, as Christians, should lead the way in confession. We, among anyone else, should know that

we are not perfect and that we inevitably fall short. We should, therefore, be the first not to fight but to confess. Regardless of our own actions, we will not live this life perfectly. Regardless of our vote, it will be an imperfect option.

Yes, we should vote, but we should be the first to confess our shortcomings. Inevitably that will create gaps in which we have the opportunity to serve in that space. There is no perfect political agenda. There is no perfect candidate. And so when we vote, engage, but then confess the limitations of our system, confess the limitations of a binary choice, and then get to work in those in-betweens. We, more than anyone, should recognize our failures. So, we confess our shortcomings to the world around us.

I have found, in my own conviction, that when I've been able to confess the failures of the church in my own life, it tends to diffuse a lot of tension when speaking with people who think differently. Instead of trying to win the argument, the words, "I'm sorry," go a long way. We're not perfect. We failed. And we will fail again. So rather than trying to cover that up to win the culture war, I wonder if the way of Jesus is the way forward. Showing up in the world, shaped more by cruciform love and otherwise. We are not called to change the world. We're called to be faithful to the way of Jesus.

So I'll close with a story: In the years of the Nazi occupation in France, the citizens of a small Huguenot village named Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the south of France offered a safe haven to thousands of Jewish refugees. The need was immense. I can't imagine what they were looking out over the horizon on and thinking, "I don't know how we can solve all of that." So, hundreds of people within this small community, under the leadership of a pastor named Andre Trocme, took part in what he called a conspiracy of goodness.

He and his wife, Magda, played a key role in shaping the imagination of a people who just said, "We must be faithful to the way of Jesus in self-sacrificial love." At the core of Tracme's ministry was an abiding commitment to the Sermon on the Mount and to political action, but one shaped by Jesus and his words. They didn't seek to conquer through any means necessary but rather held the conviction that the way of Jesus would take in these refugees.

In 1942, when the order came down to deliver all the Jews for deportation, the village undertook a dangerous form of resistance in which they estimated that probably 3,500 Jews were protected in the village and the surrounding farms. The risks of such a venture were high. They were quite literally putting their lives at risk to conceal the hiding of the Jews.

Tracme did this himself at one point and even got detained and later had to go into hiding. But the rescue efforts of that community continued. It became known as one of these small enclaves within the mighty evil of Nazi Germany and all of that era of history in which they were able to

create a different path forward. When Trocme was asked how he held to that conviction in light of all that evil, he simply said, "Look hard for ways to make little moves against destructiveness."

Church, the way of Jesus is not the way of culture war. It's one of self-sacrifice—little moves against destructiveness. It's not one of victory; it's one of service. It's not one of effectiveness but one of foolishness. It's in these particular ways that we find our identity in the very cross-shaped life of Jesus, and we enter into it.

So may we become a community that is more shaped by the cross than the way of the kingdom of the world. That we would offer our lives as Jesus did to others, turning enemies into friends and friends into family. That's the way for us. That's the way of faithfulness. Let's pray.

I want to use the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. May this be our prayer.

**Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where  
there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt,  
faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there  
is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. O  
divine master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console, To be understood as  
to understand, To be loved as to love. For it is in  
giving that we receive, It is in pardoning that we  
are pardoned, And it is in dying that we are born to  
eternal life. Amen**

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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Catalog No.1486-2FC