

Series: Becoming like Jesus and Living for Others

**Soft Hearts, Steel Spines**

Matthew 11:20-24, 28-30, Second Timothy 3:14-17

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, February 8, 2026

A reading from Second Timothy chapter 3, verses 14 through 17: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work,” the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Paul: Thanks so much, Meg. All right, I am assuming you have had this experience before, but have you ever been in a situation, it could be a church lobby, it could be dinner at Thanksgiving or Christmas with your family, or it could be a group text. A lot of different places this can happen, but you are just interacting with your friends, your family, people whom you care about, and it is going amazingly well. Like you are just loving the conversation. Everything is flowing. There is laughter, good times, and then in the middle of that moment, someone decides to bring up something like politics, or a choice that the school board made recently, or theology that they think is really important, and you are just sitting there like, “What just happened? How did we go from talking about like what kind of bread we like the most to talking about like eternal salvation or like God’s judgment?” or something like that, and it is this moment where everything shifts in the conversation. It has been flowing. It has been good. Someone makes a statement, and then immediately the energy in the room shifts. It is just totally different, and you see that person that just kind of like shrinks back a little bit. They are like, “I do not, just whatever is going to happen, it can happen out there. I do not want to be a part of this conversation anymore.” You have the moment when the person turns and gives the side eye to the person next to them. They are like, “Are we doing this now? Are you as baffled by this as I am?” It is those moments when everything just shifts in the conversation.

I do not know about you, but when that happens, when that moment takes place, I go into this internal calculation of trying to figure out, “I really did not like what that person said. Should I say something about that, or do I just let it go?” Or maybe, “I really liked what that person said, but somebody else starts getting mad at them.” It is like, “Should I jump in on their side, and should I be on their team, or do I just withdraw? Do I engage in the conversation? Do I have something to say? Do I pretend that there is an emergency flood in my house, and I just like leave and get out of it and like, just find the escape hatch?” There is this moment when we are not quite sure how to engage with a disagreement that just sprang up in the room, and some of you are sitting there like, “I have no problem, Paul, figuring out how to engage. I say what the truth is. I let people know. I just tell them off. I do not care about the consequences. I do not care if I lose my friendship or my relationship with that person. I am going to let them know what is true.” Are any of you in the room like that? You do not have to raise your hand. That would be maybe a little vulnerable. I started to, and I was like, “No, we are not going to go there today,” and then others of

you, maybe there's a little more passivity, where you think, "It is just not worth it. They are going to think what they are going to think, I am going to think what I am going to think, and I am just going to opt out, and I am going to say like, 'Yep, you said that crazy thing, but good luck with that.'" I am just not going to engage," and I think so many of us have these moments when we try to figure out, "What does it look like to engage?"

I think somewhere along the way, we have just lost the plot. We have lost each other. Many of us have not been able to figure out, and particularly in our cultural moment, how to engage with those sorts of situations. The conversation feels like it gets away from us way too fast. It gets really intense. We do not know how to disagree with each other and still remain in relationship, the way everything either comes to a massive fight, or we just stay quiet to keep the peace. If you have enough of those moments, enough of that internal calculation, you will start to notice that there are certain places you do not feel safe to be around, because you are not sure what that person is going to say, you are not sure how they will receive you, and so you just opt out. Or maybe you say the thing that you think and drive people away. I think many of us can live in this space where we feel the distance grow, the room gets colder, people begin to get more careful, and relationships fracture or stay shallow, and it can feel exhausting to know how to engage in those spaces, and here is what I want to say about that. I think that is often my experience, and I am guessing that in some ways that is a universal experience for all of us. How do we engage when people disagree? What does it mean to stand up for the truth, and what does it mean to be loving?

I think it is particularly hard in our cultural moment, because I think our culture does not want you to be honest and loving. What our culture wants is for you to be full of outrage and fear, to fear the other side, to be outraged at the other side, to be angry at the people who disagree with you, to pull away and not be connected to them. The question is, when you think about your convictions and the places that they take you, are you becoming more Christ-like in those spaces? When you think about the things that you are very passionate about, I think one of the things that our culture is pushing us towards is to this outrage and to this anger and to this vitriol, but I think if we are followers of Jesus, if we want to examine who we are becoming, we have to ask the question, "What kind of person is this forming me into?" What kind of person are your convictions forming you into? Are you becoming more like Jesus in those conversations, in those spaces? Are you someone who tries to be loving, but is really honest with the people in your life? Inside, you carry this suspicion that, "I don't know, maybe I am just a little too weak. Maybe I do not know what to say, or I will not say the right thing," and so you just back off. Maybe some of you are very honest, but you are rarely loving. You try to have a strong backbone, but it keeps coming out as cruel.

There is something I have noticed about myself. When I feel a little worn out, or a little hungry, or maybe I have not slept well, or someone is really pushing my buttons, I become very committed to the truth really fast. I am like, "Nope, you know what? This is a conversation where they need to hear what the truth is," and when I am a little more level-headed, and maybe a little less hungry, I get to this space where I think, "Okay, I just do not know. Like, I do not know what the correct approach is. I do not know if I am willing to jeopardize this relationship. I do not know if I am willing to ask questions, to hear their side. I do not know how to engage."

I think as we have been in this series talking about becoming, and as we are looking towards who we are becoming as a community, I think one of the things Jesus is calling the church in particular to,

Waterstone in particular, but the church at large to, is how to have conversations with people who do not think like us. What does it look like to be a voice of reason, love, and honesty in a culture bent on outrage and fear? What would it look like if the church held a different posture? I think the good news about that and where we are going to go today is we are going to examine the life of Jesus, because I think when you look at the life of Jesus, you see that He did this everywhere He went, with everyone He interacted with, and so we are going to look at what it means to become more like Jesus in this way. Then we are also going to take a look at scripture, because I think scripture is one of the primary things that can form us into the way of becoming more like Jesus, particularly in this area.

I want to call your attention to Matthew chapter eleven as we try to learn what it looks like to live out this call together as a church, so if you have your Bibles or your phones, you can open them to Matthew 11. You can also follow along on the screen. It is going to be right there for you, so Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 through 30. Now, what you need to know, a little context in this passage, is there are two sections we are going to look at. In the middle section, between the two we are going to look at, Jesus essentially makes this profound claim about Himself, this staggering claim, where He says, “If you want to know what God is like, look at me. If you want to know what the Father in heaven is like, then you need to understand that I am the revelation of who God is.” You do not have to guess what God is like. You just need to look at Jesus. That is the context for the two passages we are going to look at, and this is what he says. Chapter 11, verse 28: “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

When we read those words, and Jesus has just said, “If you want to understand what the Father in heaven is like, look at me,” and we read these words about rest and an easy burden and how things are light when you follow Jesus, we love this picture of Jesus, don’t we? I mean, it feels a little bit like Jesus is inviting us to an all-inclusive resort, like a spiritual all-inclusive, where He is like, “Hey, I know life has been hard. You are worn down. There has been a lot going on. Why don’t you just come sit under this palm tree with me? Here is a little drink with an umbrella. Just find a little rest for your soul.” We love this picture of Jesus, this invitation to this gentle, humble Jesus, where He gives us rest for our weary souls, but now I want you to look at something Jesus says just a little bit earlier, because while we love this picture of Jesus, it is not the full picture of Jesus.

This is what he says just a few verses earlier, and this whole passage is tied together, so verse 20 of the same chapter: “Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of the miracles had been performed.” So, He had been traveling around, performing miracles, teaching, and the towns that He was going to were essentially rejecting Him, and because they did not repent, so this is what Jesus says: “Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida, for if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, but I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than it will be for you, and you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No. You will go down to Hades, for if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom.” Now, everybody hopefully recognizes the reference to Sodom, one of the most atrocious moments of judgment in all of the scriptures. If Sodom had

seen what you had seen, “It would have remained to this day.” They would have repented, “But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Now, if I were to come to you, and you were having a rough week, which passage would you rather have me come to you with Jesus with? Like, “Hey, I know what you are going through is really hard. You just feel exhausted. Jesus wants to give you rest for your soul,” or “Man, you need to get your act together. You better wake up. Judgment is coming. This is going to be rough if you do not turn and repent.” Which one would you rather have a Tuesday morning conversation with me over coffee about? Now here is the trick. It is I think we read both of those passages, and they are both Jesus, and they are like back-to-back, and between both of them, Jesus says, “If you want to understand what God is like, look to me,” and this is what He is essentially saying God is like, and I do not know about you, but there is a little bit of a cognitive dissonance that creeps into my soul, like I do not know what to do with that. Which Jesus would you prefer? “Come, find rest,” or “Judgment is coming, so wake up”?

Here is the reality that I think we have to wrestle with, especially in light of our culture that wants us to opt into maybe not speaking truth, or simply loving people, and does not know how to hold those two things in tension. We live in a culture that wants grace. It wants people to experience the grace that essentially says anything goes, like grace is sufficient for you, and yet we shy away from truth in certain areas where it rubs up against us in the wrong way. At other times we really lean into truth, and we do not have any grace for people who are different than we are, and we push people to these two extremes in certain areas, and the reality is that Jesus is somehow able to, there is no contradiction in who He is. He is both the Jesus who is compassionate towards the humble, who invites them to rest, and He is also unflinchingly honest towards the resistant. He offers rest to the weary, and He confronts those who remain unmoved by grace. In Jesus we see someone who, his gentleness is absolutely real, but do not confuse his gentleness with sentimentality, and his severity is real. The warning is real, but it is also not cruel.

What Jesus is interacting with is a community of people, these are people who saw mercy up close. They saw truth. They saw grace. They saw miracles performed, and they simply shrugged it off like it was no big deal, that it did not matter, and so to them, Jesus is giving a warning to them. He is saying, “You need to wake up. You need to come back to reality. There is a true reality, and you are missing it, and if you turn, if you understand who I am, and you repent, what you will find is rest for your weary soul.” It is two sides of the same message, but Jesus does not flinch at the truth, and He also offers grace and compassion to those who need it, and the truth is, we need both. I think one of the things we often miss as a culture, and I will just admit to you, I miss this in my own life, is we want the loving side. We want the Jesus who offers us love and comfort, but true love, unconditional love, does not only offer comfort. It also confronts when necessary.

I want to invite you into a scenario, and let’s just imagine together for a moment that you are out with some friends at a restaurant, and you are having a great meal together, maybe one of those meals that we were talking about at the beginning. The conversation is flowing. Everything is great. You are enjoying the people that you are around, and you notice though that one of your friends has had a little too much to drink that night. They got a little excited, they were enjoying the conversation too much, and they just go past their limit, and they are very clearly drunk, and as everyone gets up to leave, the bill is paid, and they just grab their keys, and they are like, “Yep, I have got a thirty-minute drive. I am about to head home. I

am going to make it home,” and you have a choice at that moment, to confront your friend and say, “Hey, I do not know that that is the best decision for you tonight,” and you might feel a little hesitation. You might think, “I don’t want to embarrass them in front of everybody else. Maybe I don’t understand what their limit is. I don’t know,” and you talk yourself out of the conversation that needs to happen, and you get to the moment where you just let them walk out the door.

Now here is the thing. If you think of that scenario, I do not think there is any person in this room who would say that that is the most loving thing to do in that situation. I mean, what love requires in that moment is confrontation, to say, “Hey, this is not what is best for you. This is not a wise decision. You need to turn around and do something different. I will drive you home.” That’s the correct, loving response. What we would say to someone who dodges that conversation is not that they are loving, but maybe there is a little passivity or cowardice or an inability to say the thing that needs to be said. I think what you see in Jesus in Matthew 11 and in so many other places as He interacts with different people, is that He has this innate ability, this skill developed within Him, where He has the strength to confront what destroys people, and He also, at the same time, has gentleness that moves towards the weary, and they are often the same person. Jesus is not divided between tenderness and toughness. He holds them together in perfect harmony, strong enough to tell people the truth and gentle enough to keep people in the conversation.

I think that is a skill set that as a church, we need to develop, that we need to learn how to have those types of conversations. I think the world is desperate for those kinds of conversations, and the church, as we become more like Jesus, can be the voice that steps into all those places where people are so overwhelmed by fear or by outrage, and we can say, “No, there is a better way, the way of Jesus,” where we can offer people truth in grace, where we do not have to shy away from the hard conversation, but if Jesus holds tenderness and toughness and truth together perfectly, and in those situations, you and I often feel pulled apart, like we are not sure what to do. The question is, what can we do to become more like Jesus in these spaces? How can we actually be formed into people who look like Him in these places?

So, I want to call your attention to the passage that Meg just read a few moments ago from Second Timothy chapter three. Now, what you need to know about Second Timothy, and we are using a few different passages in a way that we do not normally do here at Waterstone, but this passage in Second Timothy is incredibly important, because Paul, a senior, wizened pastor, is writing to a younger apprentice who is learning what it means to minister in the gospel, and he is trying to encourage Timothy about what it looks like to remain faithful and grounded and Christ-like when the world and sometimes the church is coming apart at the seams. That is his goal in writing to Timothy, and so in the beginning of this chapter, he says things like, he paints a picture of the area and the environment that Timothy is ministering to, and he essentially says that the people are lovers of self. They are arrogant and abusive. They are slanderous. They have the appearance of godliness, but they deny its power.

In other words, what Paul is saying is the environment you are in is formation under pressure. Timothy is leading in a time when truth is being used for power, where religion is being performed, not lived out, where conviction is loud, but character is thin. Does it sound at all like our day? He says, “In this environment, what I need you to understand, Timothy, is that in this environment, it doesn’t just tempt you to believe the wrong things. It will tempt you to form into the wrong kind of person, to become the wrong kind of person,” and we have felt that too.

When the temperature in our culture keeps rising, most of us drift to the extremes. We either harden, and we become sharp and combative and always on edge and always ready for a fight, or we retreat, and we get quiet, and we become cautious, and we avoid the costly conversation. We just keep lowering the bar to keep the peace, and so Paul is writing in that space, trying to paint a picture for Timothy of how he can engage in that space, and this is what he says, painting a picture of that culture and what it is like and how he could engage. In verse 14, he says this, “But as for you.” Now that is a very simple line, but it is very important, “but as for you.” What Paul is saying is that you can’t control the times you are living in, but you can decide what kind of person you want to be in the middle of those times. You do not have to become what the moment is producing. You do not have to be disciplined in anger and hatred and outrage and self-love. You can be formed by something deeper, and so he says, “Continue in what you have learned and what you have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through Christ Jesus.”

Now notice what he says here, what scripture will do for him, because I think one of the keys to becoming more like Jesus in this area is submitting ourselves to scripture. What does he say the scriptures are able to do? Does he say they are able to make you win the argument? No. Does he say they are able to make you more impressive, to know how to pop the bubble and what other people think, or how to beat them over the head to make sure they think like you? No. He says that scripture will make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. It is as if what Paul is saying is that essentially what you need to remember is that you are to be rooted in grace, that you as people, to engage in this culture, in this moment, you need to realize that you are rooted in the reality that you were rescued, not recruited, that you did not climb your way to God. God came to you in Jesus, and so you have no room to become superior or harsh or a contempt-filled person when you interact with other people, because you remember that you were a person who experienced the grace and mercy of Jesus.

He also at the same time says to remain convinced of what he has learned, and essentially what he is saying to Timothy here is, “I want you to remember that you did not just like do-it-yourself this faith thing together. You did not sit down with a blank sheet of paper and say, ‘Oh yeah, I think this is what Jesus is like, and I think this is what He is telling me to do, and I think this is what God is.’” He is saying, “No, you have had a faith, a tradition of faith and belief and a story that has been passed down to you, and you need to remember it. You need to remember the tradition that you have grown up with. You need to remember that you have been formed across generations by people who understand scripture and have given that and passed that down to you, that you can have deep roots. When the world is trying to fill your mind with the newest, most taught, most confident voice, go back to scripture, and go back to the faithful witness of the people in your life and the church who have formed you. That is the foundation for how you live in this world and the community around you, the tradition that has been passed to you, and the holy scriptures that will remind you of who you are.”

Then he goes on, and he says this in verses 16 and 17: “All scripture is God-breathed, and it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Again, what are you equipped for? To win the argument? No. Equipped to engage with the world in the places where the world needs it most, and he says that the

foundation of all of this is scripture, which has been God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training towards righteousness, towards becoming more like Jesus.

Paul is essentially saying that not only does the tradition that you have been handed help form you, but the very scriptures teach you also, and he says scripture teaches, meaning it gives you the true version of reality, the vision of who God is and what the world is really like, that scripture rebukes. It says the hard thing. It calls us out and does not remain silent with the things that destroy us. Scripture corrects, and the image here is like setting a bone that has been broken or helping someone find the way when the path has become lost, and scripture trains us for righteousness. It trains us in practice over time, that as we submit ourselves to scripture through repetition, practice, and failure, growth will take place within us, and it will form us into the kind of people who can step into a world that seems like it is falling apart because of fear and outrage, and know how to engage with the world.

Now, I want to use an illustration here that is definitely going to date me a little bit, but it is actually one of the greatest movies that has ever been made. It comes from the eighties, and it is a movie by the title of The Karate Kid, okay? All right? Now, here is the thing. Some of you know this movie, and it is a classic for you. For some of you, it is homework now. You need to go watch this movie, because it is amazing, and essentially, this is the premise of the movie, and if you are worried about spoilers, it came out forty-one years ago, which is a gut punch for some of us in the room. Like, “Forty-one? I thought that was twenty years ago. Like, what?” Yep, some of us are older than we thought. Yeah, forty-one years ago, and the 1980’s were a long time ago. As my daughter told me yesterday, “Daddy, that was the olden days.” That is literally what she said to me yesterday. “The 1980s were the olden days.” So that was my Saturday. I am doing fine.

All right, so here is the premise of this movie. A kid named Daniel moves to California. He moves to California with his mom, and within five minutes, you realize Daniel is a little bit of a dweeb, okay? Like, that is just honestly what happens, and he is a little bit of a dweeb, who immediately starts getting beat up by a high school gang that is really well-trained in karate and wears headbands and rides motorcycles, because it is the eighties, and that is awesome, I guess. I don’t know what else to tell you, but the premise is he is getting beat up by this gang of motorcycle-riding teenagers who are like ninjas, and he decides, “I have to figure out how to stand up to them,” and he finds Mr. Miyagi, a Japanese handyman who also happens to know karate. It is a great meeting moment, and he says, “Will you train me?” He finally convinces Mr. Miyagi to train him and to teach him how to do karate, except for the fact that he does not learn any karate. He just starts doing a bunch of chores for Mr. Miyagi around his dojo, and he has to sand the floor a lot, and he has to paint the fence a lot, and he has to wax all of Mr. Miyagi’s cars, and after days and days of doing these repetitive chores and having to wash the car again, he gets really fed up, and he is really angry, and he says, “I came here to learn karate, and I am just doing free labor to do all of your chores for you, and I don’t like it. I want it to stop,” and suddenly, Mr. Miyagi starts throwing punches and kicks at him, and you think he is going to get beat up, but he doesn’t, because what happened is the wax off and the wax on was him learning karate the whole time, and you did not see it coming. You did not know, and so he totally has learned karate and all of these defensive tactics simply through the repetition of the muscle memory of doing all these chores Mr. Miyagi told him to do, and here is why we are talking about a movie that came out forty years ago, okay?

It is that scripture is so much like that. It does not form you in one moment. It does not just take one moment of you like highlighting the verse, and you are like, “Oh, got it, figured it out.” It is the slow repetition over time of committing yourself to scripture, to learn what scripture teaches, how to become more like Jesus, so that in the moment when someone starts throwing verbal punches at you, you have become the kind of person that can respond to them with grace and with truth, because that is who Jesus is. Scripture is what forms us into becoming more like Jesus, so that we, the servants of God, may be complete, whole, thoroughly equipped for every good work, completely trained to do what God has called us to do in this moment that He has called us to live for Him.

So, here is the question for you in regard to that. The question is not whether or not you are reading your Bible, because the reality is, you can read your Bible and not become more like Jesus. The reality is, are you allowing the Bible to read you, to train you, to call you out, to correct you in the areas where you have biases? Are you allowing it to push you, to shape you, to mold you? Do you just go to scriptures and find your confirmation bias? Do you find the way to win the argument, you find the thing that you need to throw at someone else, or does the scriptures serve as a mirror to you, something that exposes the things within your life that need to be changed in order for you to be formed more like Jesus, to be the kind of person who is equipped for every good work that Christ has called us to do?

I think one of the reasons why we struggle so much to understand how to engage our culture is that we have forgotten to follow Jesus in this area. We want the Jesus who says, “Find rest for your weary souls,” and we do not want the Jesus who calls out and speaks truth. Some of us have gone the opposite direction, where we are so committed to the truth, and we will preach the truth, teach the truth, proclaim the truth at any cost, even if it alienates and wounds the people around us. I think the call of Jesus is something that is completely different. In Waterstone, a church that is shaped by who Jesus is and who has submitted themselves to scripture, we develop a posture marked by soft hearts and steel spines. That is the call. That is the value for us as a church, that we want to be people who have soft hearts, tender towards people, and yet steel spines that remain convicted in truth. Here is a funny story for you about this. For about three weeks, when we were talking through this idea as a staff, I kept spelling “steel spines,” S-T-E-A-L, which means we are like grabbing and thieving people’s spines, which is a really weird image, and that’s not what we are going for. This is what we’re going for. We want to hold convictions with grace, and we want to engage culture with courage and with compassion. We do not want to be swayed by fear or outrage. We want to stay rooted in scripture, in the way of Jesus, even when it is costly to us. We want to become people whose hearts remain tender towards others, and yet whose spines remain strong in truth.

I think this is a church and a picture of the church that the world desperately needs right now, because the world does not need more enemies. The world does not need more arguments. The world does not need more people that are just driving their agendas. The world needs people who listen, who are curious, and a church that has compassion towards others and remains tender towards people, recognizes that they have been created in the image of God and are worthy of love and mercy just like we are, and yet at the same time, we live under scripture even when it costs us. We refuse to make Jesus a convenient version that people find more palatable. We want to be a church that honors who Christ said He was and submit to the authority of scripture over us for the good of the world.

I want to ask you a question. I want you to think for a moment about the conversations you have had, the places where you have experienced that tension we talked about at the beginning. What if we were a people, if you were a person, if we were a church with soft hearts and steel spines, that was not just a phrase that we were like, “Yeah, that sounds good,” but we were a people that experienced that towards others around us? I mean, what if your home became a place where hard conversations did not mean broken relationships? What if we were a church that was known not for being loud or angry or evasive, but for being clear and kind at the same time? I mean, I want you to imagine, instead of shutting down or loading up the verbal weapons, someone takes a breath, because they have this value placed in their heart that they listen before they respond, that they tell the truth, but without contempt, that they do not flinch from conviction, but they also do not weaponize it either. That if we were a part of conversations where the room did not have to explode, and it stays human.

I want you to imagine a church where people disagree politically and yet still eat at the same table and join the same small group, where confession of our sin is safer than pretending that we have it all together. Imagine the witness of a church that was not perfect people, who had it all figured out. It was a people who were deeply formed by the way of Jesus and scripture. I want you to imagine what would happen if the next generation saw that kind of faith. What if your co-workers encountered that way of life from you? What if your friends who have walked away from church said, “I do not believe what they believe anymore, but I trust the kind of people they are becoming?” That is the invitation, I think, before us. It is to come to Jesus, to learn from Him, to stay under the authority of his words, and what if, by the grace of God, a fearful and fractured world looked at the church and caught a glimpse of something different, not weakness, not cruelty, but the gentle and strong savior we follow? I think if we were a church that had soft hearts and steel spines, we would become a church that can’t lose. What if we lived like that? I want you now to stand and pray as we respond to that call before us.

Heavenly Father, God, this call, in some ways, it can sound appealing, I think, to some of us. It can sound like the kind of people we want to become, the kind of people we long for, and yet the practical reality of being that kind of person, a person who has a soft, tender heart towards those who disagree with him, and yet remains confident in the truth with a steel spine, who does not bend over backwards to make you more convenient and more palatable, God, that is an incredibly, incredibly difficult road, and we all have room to grow in that space as we try to become more like you. So Father, I pray that you would form us, that you would make us a church after your own heart, that we would become more like Jesus as we follow Him, and that as we learn to live for others, that this would be part of the posture that we take up, a church, a people, a place that can have the hard conversations, and yet it is so infused with grace and with love that people want to stay in the conversation, and yet strong enough to present the truth that can produce the results that we believe that Jesus changes everything. God, may you make us that church. May we become that kind of people in a world that is desperate for an alternative reality. May we simply take up our cross and follow you. It is in Christ’s name we pray, amen.

Now, if you would, please take that posture, open hands, to receive the benediction as we leave this place. Heavenly Father, by the power of your Spirit, may we, the people of Waterstone, become people who have soft hearts towards others and yet strong spines towards the truth. May we reflect who Jesus is

to the world, so that they may come to know Him, so that they may experience his transforming power, and we pray this in his name, amen. You may go in peace.

37:15 minutes

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Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #919