



### February the month of compassion

February is a great time to show your love, first for Jesus, second for your family and third for the family of God.

*“The king will reply, truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brother and sisters of mine, you did for me.”* Matthew 25: 40

Paul’s letters remind us that as members of the church, we are so closely connected that we can think of ourselves as parts of one body. The New Testament constantly refers to followers of Jesus, not only as Christians, but as a family – brothers and sisters. Many churches live this out when someone is ill, mourning, or facing a crisis.

#### **You show up.**

You are there for your loved ones in need. You show that love in tangible ways, with casseroles (30 at one time, thanks Rose and her team) and cards, (Thanks to the Tuesday morning prayer team) with hugs and spoken words of prayer (thanks to our pastor and the congregation). These acts let your brothers and sisters in Christ know that you are present with them. They know they are not alone **because you are beside them.**

Maybe you have been through a diagnosis and treatment, an unimaginable sorrow, and your church – your family – has been there to let you know that **you are not forgotten in your troubles.** When someone you love suffers, all your truest words and most loving actions simply declare: **“I am here.”**

The Bible tells us that God is like us in this respect. When one of God’s beloved children suffers, God declares, **“I am here.”** God hears the cries of the poor and oppressed (Exodus 3:9, Psalm 10:17, 69:33), is near to the broken-hearted (Psalm 34:18), and is near to all who call God’s name (Psalm 145:18). The promise that God will be with us is a constant refrain from Genesis to Revelation. When we see the latest tragedy on the news, we might ask, “Where are you, God?” But we already know the answer – **God is here,** in the midst of those who are hurting.

When Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-40), <sup>31</sup>*“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

<sup>34</sup>*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’*

<sup>37</sup>*“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

<sup>40</sup>*“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’*

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

He reveals to us a mystery. God is most tangibly present in this world where people hunger, thirst, lack adequate clothing and shelter, and are sick or imprisoned.

Christ claims as family member’s people who suffer and says Christ is so present in them that when you feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger – you feed, and care for, and welcome Christ. Not just your fellow Christians, but anyone in need, anywhere in the world -- these are your sisters, your brothers, your children. Their needs might seem different than the person you worship with on Sunday, but your tangible gifts declare the same message: **“I am here.”**

By reaching out to those who suffer from natural disasters, war, or systemic poverty, you let them know that they are not forgotten. Even when the need seems far from here, **by acting together as the body of Christ, we are able to be there for these members of Christ’s family.**

You show them love in supporting their needs. You are present by providing well pumps for clean water (Texas Baptist men) and seeds and training for sustainable agriculture. Through medical kits, school supplies, (Backpack ministry) temporary shelters, and safe housing **you show up.** In the midst of suffering, where is God? **God is here.** Where are you? When you give of yourself, **you are here.**

**By the grace of God the congregation of Shady shores Baptist Church is always ready and willing to serve in any way we can because we know that the Holy Spirit resides in our hearts and we are here to serve one another.**

Thank you to every member in our church for your generosity and love for one another.

**God is Here!**

**Rob Price**

