



## ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON  
7-10-16

A sermon in 5 parts, with scene changes noted by some lyrics from the song, “He Reached Down” written by Iris Dement.

Act 1: 20 years ago, Sally’s ordination, travel to Jackson Hole, Heart attack, Father’s day card.

*“He reached down, he reached down, he got right there on the ground, he reached down, he reached down and he touched the pain.”*

Act 2: Death of Mr. Harrison from “The Wounded Healer” by Henri Nouwen.

48 yr. farm worker in hospital – cleaning arteries in the legs. Visited by young student becoming chaplain. 3 times – I don’t want to die during the operation, But nobody, nothing waiting for me but hard work. “Well, I hope things go well for you tomorrow.” Stayed idealistic and didn’t notice the fear, loneliness. Ideas won’t change the fear. “The emptiness of the past and future can never be filled with words but only by the presence of another person.” I am herenow, I will be here tomorrow waiting for you.

*“He reached down, he reached down, he got right there on the ground, he reached down, he reached down, and he touched the pain.”*

Act 3: Man on the side of the road, I drove on by, called 911, justified why I didn’t stop.

Elie Wiesel – “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

*He reached the down, he reached down, he got right there on the ground, he reached down, he reached down and he touched the pain.”*

Act 4: This week at the jail, the touch on the head, anointing with oil and prayer. The pain flowed out and God’s presence filled the room.

*“He reached down, he reached down, he got right there on the ground, he reached down, he reached down and he touched the pain.*

Act 5: In a few minutes we will baptize Katherine Jo Morris. We will pray and say some wonderful and lovely words. We will make promises and call on the presence of God and Jesus. But those are words will be worth very little without our touching Kate, hugging Kate, talking with Kate, teaching Kate. It is when we engage with each other that we deepen and grow and are there for each other’s pain.

I am glimpsing the truth that being a neighbor, a neighbor with mercy, can only happen when I am willing to share my pain and am willing to see the pain in the lives of others. Being a neighbor happens when I understand that there is no Me and Them – there is only Us. And our God is a God of word and deed. Our faith is one of talk and action. Our lives are about touching and being touched.

*“We reached down, we reached down, we got right there on the ground, we reached down, we reached down, and we touched the pain.”*

Thanks be to God.

“Wisdom of Insecurity” by Alan Watts. “Nothing is really more inhuman than human relations based on morals. When a man gives bread in order to be charitable, lives with a woman in order to be faithful, eats with a “Black person” in order to be unprejudiced, and refuses to kill in order to be peaceful, he is as cold as a clam. He does not actually see the other person. Only a little less chilly is the benevolence springing from pity, which acts to remove suffering because it finds the sight of it disgusting. But there is no formula for generating the authentic warmth of love. It cannot be copied.”