

A People of Mercy and Justice

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Preacher: David Gotts

[0:00] All right, now we're going to introduce our dear special friend, David Gotts. I think this is the first time we've ever had a guest speaker in the two years that we've gathered. So it's a very, very special privilege to be able to have David to join us.

David, he's allowed to share because he's from England, you see. Everyone has to have the right accent before they... And we did the protocol already. We double-checked which team he supported, and it's Manchester United, not Manchester City.

So he passed that test with flying colors and we're like, yeah, come preach anything you want. So I'm born not too far from where you're from in Cheshire. I was born in Wakefield and up in the north. So, so good to have David.

His bio is so long. I wish I could share everything about him. But if we have time, I hope we do. I get to ask a little few questions, some questions about his family, about his wider story. But David, to sum up, he started as a banker with Barclays.

He moved to Hong Kong in 1990. He was alive in 1990. Not many. Sorry, David, I put you on the spot there. I showed your age.

[1:05] That's part of it that, yes, we're young and growing. I was alive. But now he came in 1990. And in 1993, he had a visit up in, and he'll share later, up in southern China. And then that birthed this incredible organization called ICC, International China Concern.

And now 31 years later, 120 staff, thousands of children who have been marginalized and to say would have been helped and served by ICC. And today he's going to share a little bit about that. But he's also going to share a passage from the Good Samaritan.

So I'm going to invite David. I'm going to invite you. I'm going to pray. And then we're going to go from there. So we just stretch out our hands as we pray for David. Holy Spirit come.

Lord, thank you for this man of God that's standing right here. There's a testimony to everything. Not what he's doing and what he's saying, but it's your testimony. Your power, just as you heard from him.

There's a lot. Each and every one of us have a story. And Lord, we see your fingerprints in it. And I pray today as David shares his words, may they be your words. Because may his heart be aligned to your heart.

[2:10] And Lord, may our ears be quick to listen. Open up our spiritual ears, Lord. And I pray that as we hear these stories of compassion, this compassion that leads to action. Lord, may it stir in us, Lord, to how to live in that same way.

And Lord, I thank you for just the way this man has obediently followed you and carried his cross and brought so much glory and power and healing to the kingdom. I pray, Lord, that today each of us will learn to carry our own cross.

And we understand what it means to follow you, Lord. And that we're not here just to tickle our ears and listen to an encouraging message. But Lord, let us really be transformed by your word. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. All right. Thank you, David. Good morning. Oh, that was pretty poor. Good morning. Good morning. That's a little bit better.

Okay. It's great to be with you this morning and to have an opportunity to share a little bit of my story and also God's word with you. And, you know, I trust that God is going to speak to our hearts this morning.

[3:12] You know, we've come, we've worshipped him. We've opened our hearts to him. We blessed him through our worship. Now we open our hearts for him to come and transform us and to impact and change us.

So, yeah, my name is David Gotts. And as was just shared, I'm the founder of an organization called International China Concern. And basically that organization, as you're going to hear, as I share God's word with you this morning, has been involved in impacting the lives of some of China's most marginal, marginalized children, most vulnerable children.

And so I hope that this message this morning will encourage you. I hope it will challenge you. And I hope it will help you answer the question, who is your neighbor?

That is what we're going to look at today. And we're going to look at this through a very, very familiar story that we find in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, verses 25 to 37.

And this is a story where Jesus is responding to a question that is asked by one of the teachers of the law. And that is the question that this teacher of the law asked Jesus.

[4:17] He says, Jesus, and who is my neighbor? And he's asking Jesus this question. It tells us because he wants to justify himself. Why does he want to justify himself? He wants to get a neat little answer that's going to help him feel justified in not having to help people out there.

He maybe wants to help the people right here, maybe help the people in his neighborhood or in his community. But Jesus is wanting to change that view. Jesus is wanting to break open that man's way of thinking.

He wants him to understand in a fresh way who is our neighbor. And so that's the story we're looking at. And I'm going to read this passage from the Word of God to you. And yeah, just open your hearts to whatever God is going to say through this time.

So it says, on one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. Teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What is written in the law?

Jesus replied. How do you read it? And the teacher of the law answered, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.

[5:28] You've answered correctly. Jesus replied, do this and you will live. But he wanted to justify himself. He wanted to justify himself.

So we asked to Jesus, ask Jesus, and who is my neighbor? In reply, Jesus said, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers.

They stripped him of his clothes. They beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road. And when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

So, too, a Levite, when he came to the place, saw him and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came to where the man was.

And when he saw him, he took pity on him. He had mercy on him. And he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. And then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

[6:27] And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. Look after him, he said. And when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?

The expert in the law or the teacher of the law replied, the one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, go and do likewise. So this is the story that we're going to take a little bit of time to look at together this morning.

And we're going to look at the story and then we're going to actually go beyond this story. We're going to ask a couple of different questions as we move past this story. But I want to give you a bit of background as we start on this particular situation.

Did you know that the road that is being talked about, this road from Jerusalem to Jericho, is a 38 kilometer of road, stretch of road that runs between these two cities? And you can see in this image here, that is what the road looks like.

It's not what we think of when we think of a road, you know, I mean, it's pretty rocky. It looks pretty dangerous, pretty, pretty difficult road to navigate. And this road was not only dangerous because of this kind of rugged terrain that was there, but it was also dangerous because there were robbers and thieves that would wait for vulnerable people who traveled down that particular road.

[7:47] And as people would come down that road, if the robbers and the thieves felt they were able, they would set upon people and they would basically assault them. They would rob them and they would leave them for dead. And this is what happens with this man that is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

He's making his way down this difficult road when all of a sudden people come out of the rocks. They beat him and it's a vicious attack. They don't just knock him to the ground and take his wallet. They viciously beat him. It's a savage attack. He's almost killed. He's left for dead. In all likelihood, this man was left bloodied and broken. If you look at the next scene, maybe this is kind of what would what you would have seen if you were coming down that road a little bit later on. Somebody literally sprawled in the road, covered in blood, beaten and left to die. And this scene is so bad that when the priest comes down the road and he sees this man in the road, he does see him, but he doesn't see him.

But he doesn't stop. He just keeps on going by. And then the Levite comes and the Levite, too, sees him. But he doesn't stop either. He hurries on by.

[8:58] And I think a question I found myself asking myself as I've reflected on this passage is would I have stopped? Would I have stopped? Would you have stopped? Would you have crossed over to the road where this man was lying beaten and dying?

Or would we walk on by? Because if we're really honest, if we think about it, we encounter situations all the time, don't we? We encounter situations in a place like Hong Kong where we see something and we think, you know, that's not really my business or I'm not really equipped to deal with that.

And so we walk on by. And what I've been coming to understand more and more on the journey of my life is that, you know, as Christians, as we walk down the roads of our lives, we don't only have to look up in order to see the work of Jesus.

More importantly, Jesus is wanting us to look down, to lower our eyes and to actually see the people who are left on the road. To see people like this man, to see people like those in your neighborhoods that maybe live under underpasses or live in cardboard boxes on the street. Jesus doesn't want us to look up and look away. He wants us to look down. He wants us to see them. He wants us to realize that they are people just like you and I. They are somebody's son, somebody's daughter, someone's father, someone's brother or someone's sister.

[10:26] And in the work I do with International China Concern, we are constantly forced to look down. We're constantly forced to look into some of the most difficult kind of situations that you could imagine and to step towards these places of pain and suffering.

So I'm not necessarily crossing the road to a man that has been beaten. But what I am doing, I'm walking into a government center where there are 150 or 200 children that will die within a period of weeks because of the lack of care.

It's a different experience, but it's the same thing. It's that crossing into places of pain and suffering, places that we don't want to go, that we find difficult, that make us feel uncomfortable.

And yet these are the very places that Jesus is calling you and I to go to. And when we do that, when we step into these places, we show those that need our help that there is a God in heaven that sees them.

That there is a God in heaven who is their father, that feels a broken heart because of their circumstance, that wants to come into their circumstance and to bring love and healing and restoration and forgiveness.

[11:42] The world needs to know that there is a God like that, that there is a father that loves them, that there is one who gave his life for them.

And so because of that, the staff of International China Concern, me and my team, we don't walk by government welfare centers. We don't walk by broken families that have children with disabilities. We walk towards them. We walk into their homes. We walk into the rooms where they live. We walk into their pain. We walk into their sorrow. And we become messengers of hope.

It was 1993, which is now a very long time ago, 31 years ago, that I first walked into a Chinese welfare center. I was 22 years old when I had this experience.

And I remember walking through that welfare center. I had no understanding of what I was going to see at all. It was the first time I'd ever seen children with disabilities up close.

[12:44] And I remember walking into a baby room. And there was a room with lots of different cribs and cots in that room. And each one of those cribs and cots didn't hold one baby. There were at least four babies in each of those cribs and cots.

And I would walk from bed to bed to bed and look down into the faces of these babies. And I would see babies that were a few days old or a few weeks old that were dying. They were malnourished.

They were starving. They were covered in skin diseases. And they were wasting away. I'd never seen anything like that before. And I went from that place into another room where there were toddlers.

A little bit like some of the kids that were just running around here earlier on. But instead of running around and having fun and laughter, that room was silent. It was quiet because these toddlers were tied onto chairs.

They were bound at the wrists and bound at the feet. And they couldn't move. And all they would do was rock backwards and forwards for some kind of stimulation. And they would be sat in those chairs for about 14 hours every single day.

[13:46] I went to another room where there were older children also tied onto chairs. And they were like living skeletons. They were totally malnourished. And when I bent down to look into their eyes to try and make that sense of connection, there was no way to make any kind of connection.

Because they'd already given up the will to live. They knew that death was coming for them. They knew that they only had days, maybe some of them even hours, before they would die. And everywhere I looked in that place, all I could see was death.

The reality was 90% of the children would die within two or three months. And then new children would come in and then those children would die. And then new children would come in and then those children would die.

And I learned that day that across the nation of China, there were children with disabilities whose parents loved them but who were unable to cope. And they would reach a point where they couldn't, they didn't know what to do.

And they would choose then to abandon their child. And that child would end up in a government welfare centre. And they wouldn't receive care but they would eventually deteriorate. And then they would die. And it was hard to see.

[14:54] And it was hard to bear. It was actually heartbreaking and overwhelming. And I knew that I wanted to turn away from that circumstance. A little bit like a priest or a Levite in the story.

I wanted to kind of see it and not see it. Do you know what I mean? I wanted to kind of say, I've seen it but I want to walk on by. I don't want to cross over and go into the midst of it.

It's too painful. But I also knew in my heart that God was asking, asking me. That God is asking us to not walk on by.

To cross over. To step into those circumstances. Jesus in the story of the Good Samaritan goes on to talk about the Samaritan.

The man who does stop. The man who does see. The man who does cross over the road. And begin to provide help to this man that has been wounded and beaten.

[15:50] And we read that the man's wounds are so severe. That rather than just simply patching him up and sending him on his way. The Samaritan has to get him on his own donkey. He has to take him to an inn.

He has to pay for care. And he doesn't even know if the money he's given is going to be enough. So he promises that he'll come back. And he'll pay more if more is needed. And so this Samaritan does what is needed.

He provides that room, that place of safety. He provides the care that is needed so that this man can recover. And this is then when Jesus asked the teacher of the law who had originally asked him the question.

Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? And of course the teacher of the law says it's the Samaritan. It's the one who stopped.

It's the one who crossed the road to help. I remember that when I left that welfare center on that first day, that first visit where I'd seen all of those children.

[16:52] I went back to the room that I was staying in and I began to pray. I began to pray that God would do something to change this circumstance. I couldn't bear it. I couldn't bear the idea that children were being born, abandoned and then would die.

I don't believe that that's God's will. Every single one of you has been born. You have been knit together in your mother's womb. It has a plan and a purpose for your life. I hope you believe that. If that is true for you, it is true for every child in an orphanage in China.

God knit them together in their mother's womb. He loves them and he has a plan and a purpose for them. And I found myself praying and saying, God, you know, these kids are not meant to die.

They're meant to live out the purposes that you have for them.

And I'd seen this. I'd seen them. I knew something needed to be done. And I began to pray. And I said, God, where is your church? Lord, where are the people that can come and make a difference? I wanted somebody else out. I wanted somebody else to cross the road. I didn't want to cross the road. I'd seen them like the priest and the Levite. But I didn't want to cross the road. Felt too difficult. [17:58] And it does. When you encounter situations in your own community in this city or maybe in China that touch your heart in this way, it feels difficult, feels overwhelming.

And so I prayed, God, where is your church? Where are your people? And that still small voice spoke clearly and powerfully and said, David, you're here. What will you do? What will you do? Will you cross the road to help or will you walk on? That was a hard place to have to sit before God and to wrestle with my own heart.

Because if we're honest, most of us will have to wrestle with our hearts in these circumstances. We will have to ask ourselves, can I do this? Am I willing to do this? Am I willing to be faithful to God? Am I willing to follow and be obedient to him when it takes me to a place that's maybe full of pain and suffering and difficulty? Am I willing to do that? And I had to wrestle with that myself.

[18:57] It wasn't just an easy answer. But I was being called in that moment. I didn't really realize it then, but I was being called in that moment to live out two particular things.

To cross the road and to be a person of mercy and also a person of justice. And we as the church are called to be people of mercy.

And we are called to be people of justice. The body of Christ is the vessel through which mercy and justice flows into this world. Mercy is what happens within us.

What is fostered within us. What grows up within us in response to a need that we see when our heart is touched. Mercy should be our go to response. It's that feeling that says I must cross the road and go help.

We are called to be those people. People of mercy that will cross the road and go help. To encounter those people in distress. And I'm going to share a little very quick video with you now.

[19:57] And it's a video of a boy called Tao Tao. A boy that we work with. And it'll tell you a little bit of his story. And then I'm going to come back and talk about him. Tao Tao is just like any other 10 year old boy.

He's lively, talkative and loves play-go. The only difference is he has muscular dystrophy. And his family is extremely poor. Tao Tao lives with his dad and grandparents.

His mum left when he was just a few months old. There are no disability services in his rural village. It's hard for his family to look after him. That's why generous friends like you sent ICC's team to help.

Bringing the support, encouragement and tools that he needs to thrive. One day it will be hard for Tao Tao to use his arms and legs. But right now he can learn to walk, play and enjoy life.

So that's Tao Tao. A little boy living in a rural community, miles from the city. Born with a life defining and what ultimately will be a life ending disease.

[21:01] Muscular dystrophy. And when ICC's team, some of my team came to this village, to this young boy. Tao Tao couldn't walk. He was lying on a bed all day.

He was sick, really, really unwell. Every day he was getting weaker. And the reality is he was moving towards death. And his family were desperate. They didn't know what to do.

They didn't know what to do at all. So what does it look like then to bring mercy into the life of a child like Tao Tao? For us it meant taking Tao Tao to the hospital.

We took him to the local hospital. We were able to make sure he got the medication that he needed to slow down the progression of the disease that he had. It meant sending some of our physical therapists who work for my organization to go to his home on a regular basis.

And to work with him each day so that he could build up his physical strength. It meant supporting his parents because his parents were desperate and terrified and didn't know how to help him.

[22:03] So we came alongside and counseled his parents. We were able to train them so that they know how to look after him properly. And as you could see in that video, that isn't a boy now that's lying on a bed unable to do anything sick and weak.

That is a little boy that is moving around the farm walking again. That has joy that is being loved and cared for by his family. Mercy for Tao Tao looks like us crossing the road so that we can take that journey with him and his family.

To help bring life to him and his family so that they can find hope. And today Tao Tao and his family are doing really, really well. Yeah, they've got a tough future ahead.

It's not going to be easy. You know, Tao Tao will not live a full life. But we have been part of his journey of helping bind up the wounds that he and his family have. Because of that disease Tao Tao has.

And now they're not just a family that is surviving. They are a family that is thriving. When we are people of mercy. When we cross the road. When we get involved. When we bring God's love into circumstances.

[23:12] We are part of bringing Christ transformation into the lives of the people that we touch. That is who we are called to be as the church. That is who we are called to be.

But I also want to consider another question that's related to this story of the Good Samaritan this morning. And the question is this. At what point are we going to look at a dangerous road?

A road of violence like the one from Jerusalem to Jericho. At what point are we going to look and say, you know what? That road needs to be made safe. We need to make that road safe so that when people come down it next time, they don't get robbed.

They don't get beaten. Because if we don't make the road safe, what happens? It happens again. And again. And again. And again.

And again. So Jesus calls us to respond with mercy to the immediate need. But he also calls us to be people of justice and to bring justice into these circumstances. And justice is this.

[24:14] Justice is when we look at a road like that and we say we need to make that road safe so that everybody that comes down that road in future is going to be safe.

They don't have to have the same experience as the man that was robbed and the man that was beaten. We don't have to continue to have situations where people are found on the road left for dead.

People can walk that road in safety. So justice causes us to look at these kind of circumstances like the road from Jerusalem to Jericho or the experience of children with disabilities in China.

And it causes us to ask the question, how do we bring justice to them so that they don't end up in a situation that they don't need to be in so that they can stay strong and healthy?

How can we make the road safe so that people who travel on that road do not have to live in the fear that they will be the next casualty? This is the work of justice and this too is the work of the church.

[25:14] We are people of mercy and we are meant to be people of justice. So, yes, we meet the need, but we then ask the question, how do we stop that from happening again? What do we do as the church so that these children, so these people cannot go through these same experiences?

And we know that we're meant to be this, this way, these people, because in Micah 6, 8, it tells us this. It tells us in Micah 6, 8, he has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. To act justly, to be people of justice, to love mercy, to be people of mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

So, mercy reaches into the immediate direct need, but justice addresses the issues that cause that need so that they don't keep on happening. For ICC, justice, in our work, justice seeks to deal with the situation that causes the abandonment of children.

We believe that not only do we take love and compassion and mercy into the lives of families that are struggling, but we need to be part of solving the problem that causes these families to ultimately make the decision to abandon.

[26:31] So, justice seeks to create the supports around families like Tau Tau. It seeks to create the systems so that families like Tau Tau's don't have to go through those experiences again.

And as we bring this kind of justice, we are bringing the kingdom of God into being in their lives, within their communities. And biblical justice, it flows right from the heart of God and it flows through you and I.

And it puts right those things that need to be put right within our communities and within our societies. And so, for us as a church, biblical justice is when we refuse to settle for less than what we believe God has determined to be fair and just for all of those around us.

Let me read that again because it's worth listening to. For us as the church, biblical justice is when we refuse to settle for less than what we believe God has determined to be fair and just for all, for

everyone around us.

Justice and mercy can transform the lives of children in China, but they can transform the lives of people in Hong Kong. They can transform the lives of people in your community.

[27:41] They can transform the lives of people that now, maybe last week or last month, you walked by. You maybe passed by somebody and you thought, oh, man, I wish we could do something to help that person, but it's too difficult.

Just keep going. Mercy and justice is the means through which you can transform those lives. It is because we are compelled, we are asked by God to no longer walk by, but to get involved.

One of the aspects of the work that I do that has grown a lot over the last few years has been this kind of justice work with families that are raising children with disabilities. So every year in China, there are 900,000 babies that are born with disabilities.

OK, think about that. What's the population of Hong Kong? About 6 million? 7 million? 7.5. OK, so approximately every eight years in China, there are enough children born with disabilities to fully populate Hong Kong.

OK, so think of every single person in this city being somebody with a disability. That's what happens in China in the space of a period about seven or eight years. And for every single one of those families, they begin a journey that is just as dangerous as the man who was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho.

[29:00] When they set out on that journey, they may set out with some hope. But very quickly, they look around for the support and the care that they need in order to raise a child with a disability in China. And they begin to realize that there are no services, that there is stigma, there is prejudice.

They find themselves living in poverty and any hope that they had gradually begins to decline. And often these families, they reach a breaking point. The mother will maybe walk out and leave or the father walks out and leave or both parents walk out and leave and the child is left with grandparents.

Or perhaps the child ends up sitting in a room all day with no care and no love, just staring at four walls. The work that ICC does, the justice work that we do, is we build a system of teams that identify these families.

These families that are desperate and at risk. And our teams go out, teams of social workers, physical therapists, special educators. They go out and they find these families in their homes. They knock on the door and they don't say it this way, but when that knock on the door comes, it literally means hope has arrived.

Because here are people that will walk the journey with you. Here are people that are crossing the road to step into your circumstances and your pain. And we can help take these families from breaking point and desperation to places of hope and places of love.

[30:21] A few years ago, we heard the story of a mother. Let's see, we heard the story. A few years ago, we met a mother and daughter. Her name, the little girl's name is Ja Shin. We're going to get the photograph up in a minute.

After Ja Shin was born, her mother realized that Ja Shin was basically not developing the way a normal child would develop. So she took her daughter to the doctor and the doctor basically told her that Ja Shin had developmental disabilities.

And her mother, hearing that news, wanted to get Ja Shin all of the support she could possibly get.

She began to look around to try and find that support. She looked for doctors that could help.

She looked for special educators. She looked for therapists. She couldn't find anybody. Nobody was willing to help. Nobody could help. And so Ja Shin's mum grew more and more desperate. And she began to feel completely helpless and totally hopeless.

She couldn't find the help she needed and she was alone and desperate. So Ja Shin's mother made the really painful decision that she would end her daughter's life.

[31:26] And then she would commit suicide. That was the plan. So that lovely little girl and her mum, basically, it was going to be death. That was what was going to happen.

But just before that could happen, one of our teams was able to meet Ja Shin and her mother. We were able to cross over the road into their circumstances, cross over the road into her home, cross over the road into the pain of their lives.

And our social workers and physical therapists and special educators were able to walk that journey with Ja Shin and her mum. And this little girl, when she was given the support that she needed, the changes were amazing how she began to develop and learn.

And Ja Shin's mother began to realize that there was hope for the future, that she didn't have to walk this journey alone because somebody had crossed over the road rather than just walking on by. And families like Ja Shin's family are so appreciative of this kind of support of just somebody that will stop, somebody that will say, I see you, somebody that will say, I will walk this journey with you.

And as we send in our teams to work with these families, the transformation is amazing. Ja Shin's mother is now one of our biggest advocates in the city of Changsha today. She will tell anyone and everyone that has a child with a disability, there's a hope, there's a plan, there's people that can help you.

[32:51] You need to contact ICC. You need to go talk to them because they can walk this journey with you. We do not doubt at all. We do not doubt that God's heart is for this family.

He has a plan for them. He has a plan for Ja Shin. He has a plan for Ja Shin's mother. And we get to walk the journey to help restore them and bring them to that place of strength and health.

When we set up programs like this, this is not only bringing mercy, but it is bringing justice. It is creating a way to stop families having to go through these kind of experiences all the time.

And it's necessary because I said there are 900,000 babies every year that face these kind of difficulties. Today, there are very few children that are being abandoned because they have disabilities.

More and more families in China are choosing to keep their children and to raise them because they love their kids. They don't want to abandon their son or their daughter, but they feel a great sense of desperation.

[33:50] They are like people on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, lying there, bloodied and beaten, waiting for someone to come along and to help pick them up and move them along on that journey.

And we are so grateful in ICC that we get to be part of that journey, to be able to not just walk with one or 10, but walk with hundreds and hundreds of children every year so that they can know that hope, to walk with hundreds and hundreds of families every year.

God has given ICC an opportunity in China to be able to be a good Samaritan to hundreds of families that desperately need help. And there are more and more opportunities to continue to grow that particular work that we do.

This is the kind of work that you and I are called to do. I'm not talking about you all need to go to China and join ICC, although you are very welcome. You're all very welcome. What I'm talking about is this is the kind of work we're called to do right here.

This is who we are called to be right here. You are called to be people of mercy and justice right here. You are called to open your eyes and not just see and walk on by, but to see and cross the road and get involved.

[35:02] You're called to bring the mercy and the love of God into broken, hard situations. You're called to bring the justice of God into those situations by working to try to change the system that allows them to happen.

We believe that as we do this, as we live out being people of justice and mercy, this becomes the greatest testimony to the love of God, to the presence of God, to the desire of God that we all be in relationship with him.

So today you've heard this message. You've heard about, you know, the man on the road from Jericho, Jerusalem to Jericho. You've heard about how you've heard about jashing.

You have to ask yourself the question, who is your neighbor? Who is my neighbor? I want you to take that away. I want you to think about it. And don't ask that question like the man who was the teacher of the law did.

He asked that question because he wanted to justify himself. In other words, he wanted an out. He wanted to find a way to say, oh, my neighbor is just this small group of people here. We're being challenged to ask this question about who is our neighbor so that we can have our eyes opened and that God can show us who our neighbors truly are.

[36:17] Maybe you look at this and you think children in China are not my neighbor. Well, maybe that's the case. If God is not putting you on putting that on your heart, then that's fine.

But if that God isn't putting children in China on your heart, then you need to ask him, who are the people that he does want to put on your heart? Our culture will tell us, our culture will tell us that we don't owe anybody anything, that that person over there is not connected to me.

They're not part of my church, they're not part of my family, they're not part of my community. And culture will want you to conform to that. But we are not called to conform as Christians. In Romans 12, it says, do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.

The pattern of this world will tell you not to care. The pattern of this world will tell you not to get involved. But it goes on to say, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That renewing of your mind is allowing the Holy Spirit to come in and open your eyes to be able to see who your neighbor truly is.

Not to live the way culture calls you to live, but to live the way the kingdom of God calls you to live. The reality is there are those in this world that need us to be their neighbors.

[37:23] They need us to cross the road. And I want to challenge you to be those people of mercy and justice. And you can do that. You can do that through partnering with us. You know, I would really want to encourage you to pray for the work that we do.

You guys know China. You know that China is not an easy place to do ministry. It's hard. We face a lot of challenges. So please pray for us. That's something that you can do that can make a real difference for the work that we do.

If you're interested, you can learn about how to sponsor a child with us. You can get involved in making a difference to a particular child in a family or one that is being cared for in a residential home that ICC runs.

Or one of the things you can do if you want to do something local here is we have an event every year called Walk the Wall. You can see it on the screen there. This is an opportunity where we gather people around Hong Kong to walk together in solidarity with the children of China that face these kind of painful and difficult situations.

You get to sign up online. You get to ask your friends and your family to sponsor you. And you can help raise funds that enable us to not only continue the work that we're already doing, but to expand it and to impact the lives of even more children.

[38:32] And so November 23rd, if you're interested in learning more about that, you can scan the QR code and there's more information there that will help you. But in closing, you know, may God enable you to not simply walk on by when you see situations of pain and suffering, whether they're in Hong Kong or whether they're in China.

But may God enable you to stop and to see and to cross the road and may we live as vessels of God's mercy. Vessels of God's mercy and the people of justice that is called us to be.

And I'm going to be around after the service. So I'd love to be able to chat with you more if you want to learn any more about the work that we do. But let me close in prayer for us now. Father, thank you for this opportunity to just take a little time to dig into your word, to look at this story from Luke 10 and to see, Lord, the difference between what it means to be a person of mercy and justice that stops as opposed to those that just simply walk on by.

And we know, Lord, that our culture calls us to be indifferent. But you in your kingdom call us to be those people of mercy and justice and to not be indifferent, but to cross the road. So, Father, I want to pray for my brothers and sisters here today that you would bless them and encourage them, challenge them, and that you would enable them to step more fully into being the people of mercy and justice that you need them to be here in Hong Kong.

And we ask this in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Let's have a round of applause for David. I'm going to ask you to stay right here for a little bit.

[40:07] We usually have a response song, but today I told Cubone and the band, we're going to have worship and respond in a different way. Yeah. I'd love to hear a little bit more about David's personal story, his own journey. And maybe, yeah, we don't have time to do Q&A.;

I'd love for you guys to do that. Please do chat with David and Katie afterwards. But David, you've seen a lot of suffering. You've been through a lot of suffering, probably more than the average person.

And how do you continue to persevere? What has suffering taught you to continue to persevere and do the work that you guys do? Yeah, thanks. Yeah, you know, when I started ICC 32 years ago now, there was a tremendous amount of pain and suffering that I saw.

I mean, I've literally seen babies that I cared for one day lying in a pile of garbage the next because they died overnight. You know, I've seen children starve to death.

I mean, horrible things. And I think that impacts and changes you if you allow it to. It'll either harden your heart or it'll soften it. If we take it to Jesus, it will soften our heart.

[41:14] You know, one of the things I never expected was, you know, maybe about 10 years after I started ICC, I got married. I had my first child and then my second child came along when my second child was born.

My second child was born with really complex disabilities. And so an experience that I'd had out there in my ministry, some became actually part of my life and my family.

And so I actually began to live and experience a little of what families in China go through. The pain and the struggle of trying to raise a child with a disability that can't walk easily, that never speaks, that, you know, has a lot of intellectual disability as well as physical disability.

It was a really challenging time. And, you know, through that time, it was it was it was hard. We we it stretched our faith in ways that I can't possibly ever imagine.

And then when my son was three, he was diagnosed with cancer. And so, you know, suddenly this child that we loved, who we spent all our time caring for, was also now having to deal with a cancer journey as well.

[42:17] And he went through a year of cancer treatment. And that was very, very difficult and really forced me to question, put forced me into a place where I had to answer the question, is God good?

Yeah. And that was I was hard to find an answer to. And I really, really struggled. But there was a time when I was praying and God spoke very clearly to me and said, you know, you feel sometimes like you're just alone in the midst of this.

But what you don't see is I'm carrying you. I have you. You know, and that did something in my soul that has that gave me the knowledge of the goodness of God in a way that has never changed.

And I needed that because as my son finished his cancer treatment, my wife was diagnosed with cancer. And so then I had another year of going through that cancer journey with her. And we got to the end of that.

And, you know, we were like, OK, we've done it. We've got through the end of this journey. We're going to be good. And then within two years, cancer reoccurred for both of them. And so my second son passed away seven and a half years ago.

[43:25] And then my wife passed away two years ago. And so, you know, yeah, I've walked through a lot of suffering and a lot of pain, both in terms of ministry, but personally.

But the knowledge of the goodness of God when you have it can hold you. It can allow you to walk through the most unbearable circumstances if we know that God is good.

Yeah. And so I would always encourage anybody that's going through a hard time. If you're going to fight to hold on to anything and to deepen anything in a time of suffering, let it be the knowledge of the goodness of God.

Because if you can stand on that reality that God is good, no matter what comes at you, you will stand. You will stand. And so, yeah, you know, and obviously, like I said, my wife passed away two years ago.

Hard to go through that process and that loss. But there is joy and God rebuilds and restores. And I'm a happy person. I believe that God has a great future for me and for my other son.

[44:26] And we serve him and we have passion for God and a desire to give our lives for him. That is probably stronger through what because of what we've been through. Wow. Wow. Thank you, David, for sharing so vulnerably and powerfully.

Yeah. I mean, all glory to God for you. You are a living testament, guys. Like, it's not every day we get to encounter someone like this to stand here.

And he's not he's not got a front arm. He's not lying. He's truly a man of joy, even in the midst of the suffering that we can't even comprehend. And I think that's the way that God moves like Jesus himself.

He suffered for us. He is not immune to suffering. And David, I honor you truly as a brother, as a church. Thank you. I can't imagine. But at the end, the joy that you have to persevere that produces character, that produces hope.

And so kind of one last thing. How can we pray for ICC? How can we pray for you as a family? Yeah, thank you. Your son and ICC. So right now, my son is an atheist, which is kind of an interesting thing to go through.

[45 : 27] You know, and I think it's not a big surprise having lost his brother and having lost his mum. I think a lot of questions around like, you know, why is my life being the way it has been?

Yeah. And he doesn't have much space in his life. God is not an angry atheist. He just doesn't believe. So if God puts him on your heart, please pray for my son, just for the Holy Spirit to really wake him up so that he can see the reality of who Jesus is.

So that would be a personal prayer request and one that's very close to my heart. Jamie. Jamie. And then the second would be, you know, pray for our work in China. You know, there are so many opportunities.

There are so many families that need help. And we constantly are meeting new people in new places. And there's always this desire to do more. So pray for God's blessing on the work that we do.

Pray for people around the world to get behind us in supporting what we do and praying for what we do. China is a hard place to do work right now. You know, as you guys probably aware, you know, hundreds and hundreds of organizations have been closed down in China over these last five years.

[46 : 32] Seven years ago, there were 7,500 foreign NGOs working in China. Today, there are less than 500 left. And that's because the government has chosen to close many of them down. We're very fortunate and we're very blessed that we are there fully with the support of the Chinese government.

But it's difficult. So pray for favor with the government as we continue to do our work. And you know what? Like I'll be in China tonight and tomorrow I'll be with the kids that we serve.

And every time I look into their faces, it's worth it. Absolutely worth it. It's wonderful. Amazing.

Amen. Amen. Well, thank you, David. Seriously, guys, this is a rare moment for the gathering to be able to just witness the power of God move through someone.

To be able to truly say the goodness of God is with us. Despite all that's happening, despite all that is continued to happen in China. And you're one of the very few organizations I know that are so Christ-centered at the heart of what you do with the government support, with even some of the financial support from them, which is incredible.

And I think we have to, guys. It would be amazing if we can continue to just come around. David, pray for Jamie. And come around ICC. What it means. You could sponsor. You could support. We can walk.

[47 : 40] We all have a lot of networks, resources, and influences, and whatever. Let us pray and ask God what it means to cross the road. I would love the name of it. Let's pray for David as we wrap up.

Father, we are so humbled and in awe to see something so supernatural. Lord, it is unnatural for any man to stand here and say the goodness of God prevails.

Even losing his wife, losing his son, and seeing so many children that have the last, the lost, the least, that he served all over the years. Lord, it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that this is possible.

So we give you all the glory. And the same power that is in David can move in each of us right now. So God, I pray that we have more faith as a gathering to know what it means.

Even when we go through the valley and the shadow of death. To know what it means that you are with us. And Lord, even now as a gathering, as a family, we pray for our brother Jamie.

[48 : 44] We pray that wherever he is, Lord, that he comes to know that he is loved. He is seen. And Lord, that his dad's faith, Lord, that he gets to see when witness firsthand can one day be imparted to him as well.

And Lord, we lift up the whole organization of ICC. All the staff, all the children, all the families that they serve. Lord, may you continue to grant them favor. May you continue to, yeah, open our eyes to see the ways we can support, we can help, we can pray.

Lord, it's like David and Goliath, Lord, it's a huge task ahead of us. It's a huge country. Our neighbor has so many needs. But Lord, with you, all is possible.

And so, may we just take what we have, our five loaves and two fish. And we ask, Lord, that you break it, you bless it, and you multiply it. Just as you've done in David's life, may you do the same in each of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you, David. All right. Thank you again for everyone. See you next week.