

**DO WE REALLY CARE?
PS. 142**

NEED: **CONCERN FOR THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF OTHERS.**

PROPOSITION: **WE SHOULD CARE FOR THOSE AROUND US WHO HAVE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS.**

OBJECTIVE: **TO MOTIVATE GOD’S PEOPLE TO CARE.**

INTRODUCTION:

Pastors do not usually welcome anonymous letters. They usually leave you with an inner sense of emptiness and frustration. Such letters are usually full of bitterness and criticism from someone who is not willing to sit down and to discuss the problem. However, I received an anonymous letter this week from someone who watches our television ministry that served as a probe to my own heart. God used it to get me ready to share with you my burden this morning. In response to the message I preached last Sunday on “Everybody Ought to Know,” this person confronted me with some questions about our church. In the midst of the letter the person asked, “Are your people, God’s people, ready to love and teach the homeless person that may come in his or her best rags? Are you ready for the teenagers that come in their funny hairstyles, pierced face and bodies, tattoos, and strange clothes? Are you ready for the prostitute, who may only have her harlot lifestyle of living to come in? Are you ready for the drunk who may smell of urine and alcohol off the streets? Are you ready for the half crazed, stoned teenagers who have been in the alley high all night, with no place to go? Are you ready for the pregnant unwed teenagers? Are you ready for the undisciplined children that have no knowledge of manners or listening quietly while someone teaches? Are you ready for the elderly in

wheelchairs who so desperately need love, support, and help and a touch from God? Are you ready for the mentally retarded and the mentally ill? Are you ready for the divorced mothers and fatherless children, that so desperately need guidance and the love of Christ? I believe that you as a leader of the sheep are ready but are your people ready?" The letter goes on to really issue a challenge and to express the need for a church in Lubbock that cares for all kinds of people.

As I read this letter it reminded me of the Psalm that we have read this morning. David found himself at a point in life in which he honestly felt that no one cared for him. He was not able to identify anyone at this point of despair that cared whether he died or lived. The subscription to this Psalm indicates that it was written from a cave. It was probably written from the cave in En-gedi. David hid in this cave while he was being pursued by King Saul at the height of King Saul's rage against him. There was literally no place that he could go. He could not go home to Bethlehem because Saul would find him there. He could not go to his normal places of abode because his life would be in danger. He finally reached a decision that the only thing he could do was abandon the land of Israel and go to a neighboring nation. It was one of the darkest moments in David's life. There are many people who share David's sentiments today. They, too, are at a place where they feel that no one cares.

As we assemble here this morning, caring for others is one of our assignments. I want us to look at this in some depth and ask ourselves the question that this anonymous letter writer asked, **DO WE REALLY CARE?**

I. SOME FEEL THAT NO ONE CARES FOR THEIR SOUL.

The Hebrew word that David used in this Psalm is a graphic word. This word means to acknowledge a person as a person. It means to seek a meaningful relationship with a person. It means to visit a person and to be willing to help them bear the burdens of life. It means to come along side and share with them what you know about God and His help in life. When David said, “No one cares for my soul!” this is what he meant.

It did not mean that there was no one who had an interest in him. There were doubtlessly some that had some kind of selfish interest in David. There were probably some bounty hunters that would have welcomed the opportunity to capture him and turn him over to Saul. They were interested in him because of what he might mean to them financially. When we talk about there beings some for whom no one cares, we do not mean that there is no one with any interest in them. There is always someone interested in getting their money. There is always someone interested in getting their vote or their business. But David was saying there is no one interest in me. Literally he used the word “soul” in his statement. The soul in a context like this is the life, the person. David is declaring that there is no one interested in me just for the sake of me. Everyone who has an interest in me has a selfish interest in me.

There are many people in our society who could legitimately make this the statement of their lives. There are children who could make this statement. There are children in this community for whom no one seems to care. No one cares whether they ever have an opportunity to learn the things of God and to go to heaven when they die. No one really

cares about their welfare. They have parents who do not care, grandparents who do not care, neighbors that do not care, they have no one who cares. Every child ought to be able to say there is someone who cares for me.

There are many youth for whom this could be a legitimate statement. They have been pushed out of their homes emotionally and in some cases physically. Parents are ready to be rid of them. Sometimes their lifestyle has been so disruptive in the family that the family had decided they are better off without them. Their friends are only surface friends. They are there with them as long as they have something that they need but when they cannot get anything out of them any longer, then they are gone. There are youth that literally have no one to care.

There are adults in this community who are plagued with loneliness, emptiness and no one seems to care. If they had to make a desperate telephone call today because of some emergency that had arisen in their lives, they would not have anyone to call. They would probably end up calling some impersonal service because there would be no one to whom they could turn who really cared, but was really interested.

There are senior adults for whom no one cares. Some of them spend day after day waiting for a telephone call that never comes. Some of them watch the door to their room at the nursing home day after day watching for someone who cares, and they never come. Some of them can honestly say and it be the true context of their lives, no one cares for me.

I think we need to begin this morning by just admitting that there are people around us for whom no one cares. Some of us probably know some of them.

Some of them could identify with Peter Loetz who took a bad fall that left him with a punctured lung and broken ribs and internal bruising. Lying in an emergency room, barely conscious, he probably thought things couldn't get any worse.

But they did. As he looked up the two doctors responsible for his care began arguing over who would get to put a tube into his crushed chest. The argument became a shoving match and one doctor threatened to have the other removed by the security police.

"Please somebody save my life," Loetz pleaded as the doctors fought over him. The two doctors were arguing over a procedure. While they were debating two other physicians assumed responsibility for the patient and saved his life. Many of those who stand in desperate need of someone caring see all the hustle and bustle around them but they are still left in the midst of their loneliness and pain.

II. WE ARE GUILTY OF NOT CARING.

There were many people in Israel who should have cared for David. He was the anointed one, future king of Israel and there should have been godly people in that nation who came to his rescue, but they didn't. We ought to care, but the truth is we do not care.

I spent some time thinking about why no one cared about David's plight. The kind of reasons I came up with would surely be the kind of things that block us from caring.

1. It may be too costly.

To have cared for David at this point in his life would have been a costly act. To have acknowledged him and identified with him would be to offend angry King Saul. To have identified with him would put you under obligation to provide some financial support for him during this time of waiting. It might even have required you to become one of his followers. So there was a legitimate cost to caring in that day.

If you choose to care for people in our day, it will be costly. It will cost you emotionally. To get involved in the life of people with pain and problems almost always means that you open your life up to pain. It is almost impossible to really care without paying a price emotionally. Charles Allen told of a little girl who went on an errand for her mother. When she was tardy in returning, her mother asked for an explanation. The child explained that a playmate down the street had fallen and broken her doll. "I stopped to help her," explained the daughter. The mother wondered what in the world her child could have done to help mend the broken doll. Her daughter gave her the marvelous reply, "I just sat down and helped her cry." Identifying with people and their need and really caring for them will probably mean sharing their tears.

It may also be costly financially. For a church to really care will cost them financially.

We've already experienced some of that in our ministry at the University Baptist Mission

Center. We experience some of it as we relate to our friends at Love in Action. It is not enough to say to people, “We care” and then leave them in their plight if we are able to do something to help them. We must be ready to share what we have to the extent that it will help them meet their needs.

It will in all probably be costly in time. There is no way that we at church can say to the lonely, broken, lost individuals of this city, “We care” without devoting time to it. Some of you have been debating this week about commitment to FAITH. The biggest hindrance in making such a commitment is your perception of what it will cost in terms of time. It will cost in terms of time. Is it our unwillingness to pay the price that keeps us from caring?

2. We may decide that they are not worth it.

I can imagine that there were some in Israel that when they saw the plight of David just concluded, "He is not worth our caring." They may have concluded that he may have done something to offend Saul and was only getting what he deserved. They probably reasoned that he must be a lawbreaker and was worthy of isolation and punishment.

They may have chastised him because he had not stayed at home and taken care of his father's sheep instead of getting out and involving himself in the political processes of the nation. Whatever the reasoning may have been the bottom line was they had decided that he was not worth their care.

Have we followed that path? Have we decided that these that the person mentioned in her letter are not worthy of our care? Have we decided that the homeless are not worthy? Have we decided that the mentally ill is not worthy? Have we decided that the divorcees are not worthy? Have we decided that the elderly are not worthy? Have we decided that the worldly businessman is not worthy? Have we decided that those incarcerated in our jails and prisons are not worthy? It may be that we have reasoned in our minds that they are not worthy of our care.

Henry Nouwen helps us at this point. He wrote, “Compassion is born when we discover in the center of our own existence God is God and man is man, but also that our neighbor is really our fellow man.”

3. We may have decided that someone else should do it.

It is not that we do not feel that they are worthy of their care we just do not feel that it is our responsibility. I am sure there were many sympathizers with David’s cause in Israel who never did anything to help him. In their own minds they rationalized that it was not their responsibility. The people of his hometown ought to help him, not the people who lived in Jerusalem. The people from Judah ought to help him, not the people from Ephraim. So everyone reasoned around until in the end actually no one helped him.

Where did we get this idea that we are not responsible? Where did we get the idea that we can ignore those who need us? Surely we did not get it from our Lord.

III. WE HAVE REASON TO CARE.

There is good reason for you and me to care for those around us who are saying, “No one cares for my soul.” If you will just allow me a few moments I want to remind you of what the scriptures would say in response to this kind of word.

1. God modeled this kind of care in Christ.

Really the thrust of Ps. 142 is that when no one else cares, God does. We do not have to depend on some Psalm in the Old Testament though for evidence that this is true. When God clothed Himself in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth He demonstrated that He really does care. Jesus never met a broken, lonely, life to which He did not offer a kind word and a helping hand. He seemed to pick out for special attention those that the world had decided were not worthy of any attention: the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery by religious leaders, a dying thief on a cross, a little tax collector who lived in Jericho and on and on we could go.

If you are here this morning and you feel that no one cares, I want to offer you a word of hope. God does care about you. You do matter to Him. You may not matter to parents and family or friends, but you matter to God.

If God cares, surely those of us who have experienced His care ought to care about others.

2. Love demands it.

Jesus made the second great commandment the Old Testament word that says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self.” There is no way to love your neighbor as you love yourself without caring about them. If you love them like you love yourself, then you will acknowledge them, you will seek them, you will seek a meaningful relationship with them. You will visit them and help them at their point of need. You will share your life with them to what ever degree is necessary and possible. Love demands that we care.

3. Eternity rewards it.

When we care for those around us, we are doing something that will receive reward. If you read carefully the books of history in the Old Testament, you will discover that those who cared for David in his time of need were not forgotten. They became the strategic people in His kingdom when He finally came to the throne. When we care for others in the name of Christ, Christ Himself does not forget.

This reminds me of that parable that Jesus gave toward the close of His ministry concerning the sheep and the goats being divided in the Day of Judgment. You will recall that to those who were counted as His people Jesus commended them for what they had done for Him. He said to them that “you have come to see me when I was sick, you visited me in prison, you fed me and clothed me, you met my need along the way”.

When they responded to Jesus by saying, “Lord, when did we do these things for you?” Jesus’ responded, “When you cared for these who had such needs you were really caring for me.” We must never forget that we meet Jesus in those out there that needs our love and care. It was to these that Jesus gave the kingdom with all its eternal glories and joy. It was to these that He gave His everlasting commendation.

To those who live their lives selfishly and pass by the needs that they met along the way, Jesus had a final word of condemnation. We authenticate our relationship with Jesus by the way we care for those around us who stand in need.

I come back to the question, “Do we really care?”

William Blake wrote a poem years ago that put it into beautiful language:

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow, too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a fallen tear?
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep and not be with sorrow filled?
Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no; never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

Think not that thy canst sigh a sigh
And thy Maker is not by;

Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

Oh! He gives to us His joy,
That our grief He may destroy;
Until our grief is fled and gone,
He doth sit by us and moan.

There's no question about Him caring for us! Do we care for others like He has cared for us? Good, we should!