

Ordinary People!
Scriptures: Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 2:1-5
February 15, 2026 – First Sunday of Week of Compassion

When I was in college, I went on a mission trip to Moore, Oklahoma. There were other locations as options such as Tanzania and Mexico, but I chose Moore since I wondered what it would mean to do missions in what is essentially my “backyard.” Moore had been devastated by tornadoes the previous year, and there were multiple projects led by local organizations and congregations to restore the town back to pre-tornado time. We painted fire hydrants and curbs red; helped build a swing set that had been blown away for a family with young children; helped sort food for the local pantry and tried lots of barbecues.

To say the trip was life-changing would be an exaggeration, but it did create a shift within me. It showed me that there is so much support needed in the day to day by ordinary people for ordinary people. To help recreate a sense of normalcy and wholeness that had been devastated by a natural disaster. Having those local elements restored meant there was the potential for them to return to their homes and neighborhood. To return to the places they have established lives, created memories, and where they find comfort.

The story read this morning within Mark is a wonderful one about faith and perseverance. I think about the conversation that led to them to go through the roof. How exhausted were they walking around trying multiple times to get in

through the door, defeated by the inability to get to Jesus? Until that moment, when the suggestion of the roof is shared among them. Besides the obvious safety concerns, incredible mess, and property damage, it would create an inconvenient moment for those inside the house, and of course the homeowners! I know I have my 21st century lens on, but how do you think the four, once determined to go through the roof, got over the shame that would come with their actions? A culture where shame drove the narrative.

In doing some research, I found that roofs in that time were mostly made of wooden beams, tree branches and clay. I'm sure the community of people who all made it hard to enter were able to support the re-building of the roof once the crowds dispersed. Yearly roof repairs would have been needed, so it could have been a part of this yearly cycle that was helping the family. Although we didn't read it, this story ends with Jesus telling the man to take up his mat and walk away, which he does. It begins with a major inconvenience and ends with a miracle.

Ordinary life can be exhausting, stressful, overwhelming, you name it. Even good work can be hard and result in our energy being limited. The demands are high and the list of things to do are ever growing, while the resources and support may be limited. Asking for help and inconveniencing others seems out of the question. And we want a better world, but we're wondering if anything we do matters?

I will admit that I don't have the answers to cure those thoughts or feelings, but I will point to organizations like Week of Compassion who provide tangible examples of the work our denomination does, and the money we send, do make an impact. I will also admit that I feel like as Christians we live in this liminal place of feeling hopeful and hopeless, the now and the not yet. We live in Psalm 23 of being able to lie in pastures by still waters, and yet God's rod and staff will comfort us as we go through the darkest of valleys. So, what are we to do?

In the Matthew story about the Transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah appear talking to Jesus like old friends. While this is happening Matthew 17:5 says, "While he [Peter] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'" Right before this moment, Peter was asking Jesus if he wanted them (Peter, James, and John) to create a place for them to dwell. One commentary I read noted that Peter, "wanting to freeze the moment, he proposes tents, inadvertently equating Messiah with prophets and missing the unique glory that the Father immediately affirms. The scene exposes the human impulse to domesticate divine revelation."

One of my favorite parts of scriptures are the ways in which humanness is called out. For example, before the Transfiguration story, Peter goes through so much with Jesus in the previous chapter, Matthew 16. He says Jesus is the Messiah

and Jesus says he will inherit the keys to the kingdom, to the next moment saying he won't let Jesus be taken when they come for him to fulfill the prophecy, and Jesus says the famous get behind me Satan quote. Like the earlier quote noted, as humans we have tried and try to put God/Jesus/Spirit/Divine into a box. As humans, we are limited, and there are limits to what we can do, how much we can sustain, and it's how we make sense of the world around us. However, the incarnation pushes back against those limitations. God came and dwelled among us? Jesus lived and died and rose again? The result is the creation of this community, the Body of Christ, who, supported by the Holy Spirit (spirit of God) work in the world for the betterment of all of creation, for justice, for wholeness, for healing and restoration.

The title for this year's 2026 Week of Compassion offering is "A New Way." We see how these friends did whatever they could to ensure their friend could meet Jesus. They didn't let a roof get in the way, nor the potential shame and inconvenience their actions would result in. The faith, the forgiveness, and the way out of no way. Through the work of Week Compassion, people are being helped in ways that restore their ordinary lives, by ordinary people. I know as a society we are inundated with celebrity culture, and the rise of technology doesn't help this, but we don't even know the name of the four friends or the man who was healed.

The work of the Gospel, and of the Body of Christ, the church, is filled with ordinary people doing ordinary things to effect change in the world. Ordinary is not boring or unimportant. The hope of an ordinary life means that all people get to live lives where they can have all that they need, where they can be who they are meant to be, and live without fear or worry about what will happen next. Where we can be in relationship with one another, to have community and neighbors who care for one another, because ordinary people are God's created and beloved children.

In the ordinary, in the safety of not worrying about basic necessities does the extra-ordinary arise. It's not a rule or exception, for I know that people in dire situations have brought forth extraordinary ideas and movements. However, there are so many stories of ordinary people doing ordinary and extraordinary things that aren't in books or made known to the masses, but they've made an impact. The work of Week of Compassion is to try and restore and make whole those communities who have been impacted and disrupted, so that people can live ordinary lives.

Let's zoom out a little bit. We know how Christians and the Church are viewed in our society today (read: negatively). However, it's not our job to fight with them about their view of Christians and Christianity, not on a large scale, and not on a smaller scale. It's our call to act Christ-like. It's our call as members of

Vista La Mesa in La Mesa, California for it to be so commonplace to act like Christians, that people know or can go one day, “Oh the folks at Vista La Mesa? They care for our community, they love people well, they care about their neighbors. It’s ordinary for them to be, act, and do what they do.” It’s about our actions as church in this community and our lives, to be so steeped in love, in mercy, in justice, and with humbleness, that it oozes out of us in our ordinary lives that it’s not a second thought.

It may be that sometimes we are inconvenienced by God's calling. Isn't that funny, that us, mere mortals are inconvenienced by God? If you haven't noticed by now, but so many stories within scripture are moments of being inconvenienced by the Divine. Are we going to lean in and dig through the roof, or let fear and shame hold us back? We know how God will respond. “Listen to him!” God says about Jesus. What does Jesus say? Mathew chapter 25, verses 44 and 45, Jesus says, “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?’” “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.’”

Let’s listen to Jesus and be ordinary people doing the extra-ordinary work God has called us through Jesus Christ. Being open to the new ways of following Christ; even when it feels like an inconvenience, we may see that people will know

they matter and that they are loved. People will be fed, housed, and clothed. People may see justice, may be restored, may be made whole. Let it be so. Alleluia and Amen.