

J.D. Ousley
December 11, 2016 Sermon
Lessons and Carols
“Thanks for Sharing”

In the Name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Amen.

When someone says to you, “I feel your pain,” you may tend to be skeptical. After all, how can someone else really feel your pain? Surely, no other human being can know *exactly* what you’re going through. We are all different. We are all unique individuals.

But there’s one exception to the isolation that we encounter because of our individuality. There is someone who can penetrate our uniqueness.

Jesus can feel our pain. Christ can sense our inner turmoil, he can detect emotions that no one else can feel. In the words of the Christmas carol that we sang at the beginning of this service:

“For he is our lifelong pattern; daily, when on earth he grew, he was tempted, scorned, rejected, tears and smiles like us he knew. Thus he feels for all our sadness, and he shares in all our gladness.”

“He feels for all our sadness...”

In Twelve Step groups, after a person speaks about her addiction, members of the group respond with the refrain, “Thanks for sharing.” These words affirm the person making a testimony, when she has revealed unhappy truths about herself.

And beyond of Twelve Step meetings, it’s *good* to tell our friends when we are struggling with deep problems-- as it can be comforting to others when they tell us of their issues.

When we think of the value of sharing, we remember that the Christmas season is a good time for us to reach out to people we know who are struggling. A phone call to someone who is isolated by age or infirmity can be immensely cheering. Now is a great time to try to touch someone else’s pain.

Shortly after our Associate Rector arrived, she had her own idea of reaching out. She decided that she would put on her vestments and spend a half hour every Tuesday after Morning Prayer standing on the front steps of the church. While she was there, she would offer a blessing to any person who wanted one.

I sub for Adrian some Tuesdays, and take my turn on the steps, and I can personally testify that the response of passersby is consistent and gratifying; people come up to us and tell us about all sorts of anxieties, and we can pray for them.

While Adrian is standing on the front steps, she has a sign posted on a chalkboard next to her. The sign reads, “Ask me for a blessing. God’s grace is meant to be shared.”

And doesn’t that sum up the message of this service? The message of the angels, the message of Christmas, the message we gratefully receive from our creator?

“God’s grace is meant to be shared.”

Amen.