



LESSONS IN LIVING

“The Village We Build”

A St. Andrew's Sermon
Delivered by Heather Malkawi
July 13, 2025

Scripture Reading:
Matthew 5:1-10

*“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside,
and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around,
Jesus began to teach them:*

*‘Blessed are those who are poor in spirit:
the kindom* of heaven is theirs.*

*Blessed are those who are mourning:
They will be consoled*

*Blessed are those who are gentle:
They will inherit the land*

*Blessed are those who show mercy to others:
They will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are those whose hearts are clean:
They will see God*

*Blessed are those who work for peace:
They will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle
for justice: The kindom* of heaven is theirs.*

**The word ‘kindom’, often used by mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi–Diaz,
replaces ‘kingdom’ because it represents an egalitarian realm and emphasizes
our familial relationship with each other*

Sermon

Friends, loved ones, people of my chosen community, thank you for being here with me, sharing this space and sharing this time. Whether you are on YouTube, Zoom, or here in person, I will never be able to share the gratitude that I have with you as much as I would love to.

Before we get started, I feel like it's necessary for me to give a warning. Some of the things that I'm going to be discussing today are going to be difficult topics. I encourage you to sit in that and really just feel those feelings sometimes, especially in these times that we're going through right now.

Have you ever had a song just grab hold of you and refuse to let go? I'm not talking about a catchy pop tune that loops in your brain for hours. I mean a song that grabs you by the collar and it shakes you and says, *Pay attention. This matters.* For me, music has always been one of my most reliable sources of sanity. It's not just the rhythm or the melody. Although those things are healing in their own way, it's the words. It's the words that reach down deep, wrapping around the wounds that are deep within, letting you know that you're not alone, that someone else has felt this pain, too.

Recently, one of those songs has taken residence, not only in my mind, but in my soul. It has been on repeat in my mind day and night. It's not just the melody. It's the message. It's a reminder. It's a warning. It is a cry. There's something wrong with the village. I sing it. I hum it. I feel it.

The song, it's by an artist named Wrabel. Not many people necessarily know who he is. It's a combination of pop and folk. And I absolutely encourage you to look it up, YouTube, Spotify, whatever your music choice. But here are just some of the lyrics from this haunting anthem.

*No, your mom don't get it
And your dad don't get it
Uncle John don't get it
And you can't tell grandma
'Cause her heart can't take it
And she might not make it
They say, "don't dare, don't you even go there
Cutting off your long hair
You do as you're told"*

*Tell you, "wake up, go put on your makeup
This is just a phase you're gonna outgrow"*

*There's something wrong in the village
In the village, oh
They stare in the village
In the village, oh
There's nothing wrong with you*

*It's true, it's true
There's something wrong with the village
With the village
There's something wrong with the village*

*Feel the rumors follow you from Monday all the way to Friday dinner
You got one day of shelter, then it's Sunday hell to pay, you young lost sinner
Well I've been there, sitting in that same chair
Whispering that same prayer half a million times
It's a lie though buried in disciples
One page of the Bible isn't worth a life*

*There's something wrong in the village
In the village, oh
They stare in the village
In the village, oh
There's nothing wrong with you
It's true, it's true
There's something wrong with the village
With the village
There's something wrong with the village*

This song was originally written to speak into the experience of the LGBTQIA+ community, especially trans youth. But this message, this message reaches far wider. It speaks to anyone who has ever been labeled *wrong*. Just for being themselves. Anyone who has ever carried the weight of shame, not because they did something wrong, but because they were something different. I think most of us, if we're honest, we can relate to that. Maybe not in the same way, but somewhere along the journey, we've all felt misjudged, misunderstood, or misnamed. So what do we do about it? It seems to be a question.

What do we do about it? Lately, I have had to really be intentional about protecting my peace. I have stepped back from all of the noise. There's a lot of noise, but it's not because I don't care. It's because you can't pour from an empty cup.

So instead, I have leaned into the people who remind me that I'm not alone. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not perfect. I am not perfect at self-care or even caring for other people, but I will keep trying. And today, if I'm able to do my job right, which, fingers crossed, that's what we will hope for. I hope that we all will take a moment to reflect on the state of our village. I don't mean just the village here at St. Andrew's. I mean all of your circles of influence, your home, your family, your chosen village, the place that you worship, the place that you work, the place that you go to school. These are your villages, whether they're chosen or not. I want us to reflect on the state of our villages and not what's wrong *in* it, but what is wrong *with* it. There's a difference between something being wrong *in* the village and something being wrong *with* the village.

Let's start with that first one. Here in Texas and in so many other places, we are fed a steady diet of fear. Fear of immigrants, fear of queer kids, fear of diversity, fear of the unknown. You know,

fear, it's really profitable. It sells headlines, it motivates votes, and it shapes policy. Soon, the people that we used to call neighbors, they become threats. And before long, we forget that every policy affects someone's child, someone's parent. And someone's sacred life. That's what's wrong in the village. Fear that poisons connection, suspicion that replaces compassion.

But fear, it doesn't grow in a vacuum. It's nurtured by something deeper. What happens when the village itself, the very community that is supposed to raise, protect, and nurture, becomes the source of harm? We've all heard the phrase, *It takes a village*. And honestly, I believe that. But what happens when the village turns on its own? Historically, it happens when people don't fit the mold, when they're too different, when they're too loud, too poor, too queer, too brown, too bold. The problem isn't in the people. It's with the systems, the structures, the norms that we've accepted as just the way things are.

Now, some of you might be asking or thinking, *but my community, my community is trying*. We show up and we care. And you're right. Many of us do. But why? Why are we still waiting for someone else to speak up first? Why are we waiting for a hero to emerge before *we* act?

Let's be real. Stepping up is risky. History has not been kind to the truth-tellers and the justice-seekers. Think of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr, Harvey Milk. Each saw a sickness in their village. Each stood up anyway. And each were assassinated for it. Malcolm X was disillusioned with the Nation of Islam. He broke away to speak a broader truth, and it cost him his life. Dr. King dared to name systemic civil rights issues such as racial discrimination and segregation, and he was killed for his courage. Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay elected officials, was murdered for daring to be visible. When we refuse to say their names or to support those who follow in their footsteps, we don't just lose our history. We lose the blueprint of survival.

So how do we keep going when everything feels broken? This is where survival theology comes in. Survival theology is a theological perspective often associated with Black Christian churches, and it emphasizes the importance of enduring hardship and finding hope in the face of suffering. Now, it doesn't promise ease. It doesn't speak of comfort with the crowns. It speaks of grit, of endurance, of hope in the face of hardship. It is the theology of a mother working two jobs just to keep the lights on. *It is the theology of the trans teen choosing to live just one more day*. It is the theology of communities whose history is erased, but whose presence remains undeniable.

In many Indigenous and African traditions, stories are survival. Oral history is sacred. When we lose our stories, we lose our way. But I will tell you, there's one story that has never stopped speaking. It's a story of Jesus. When he shared the Beatitudes that we read and heard from the scripture this morning, he wasn't just offering comforting words. He was laying down a roadmap for a new village, a village that we can continue to build, one rooted not in power, but in presence, not in domination, but in dignity.

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. Blessed are those who are gentle. Blessed are those who work for peace. And blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice.

Survival theology is grounded in the body. It is lived experience in showing up even when you're broken, even when you're hurting. It declares that existence itself is resistance. He was naming

what survival looks like. I'm calling it holy. This is survival theology in action when we say, *I'm sacred. I am not the problem I am the proof, and I am still here.* These revolutionary declarations are affirmations of survival in the face of empire, marginalization, and despair. That's exactly what Jesus was doing in the Beatitudes. He was blessing the people that the world had cursed. He was naming the ones who were already surviving and calling them holy.

You all, I want that. I want that. I want a village where the peacemakers are called children of God. I want a village where those who mourn are comforted. I want a village where those who are hungry for justice are filled. I want a village where the persecuted are honored and not erased.

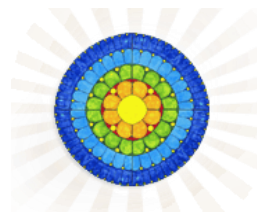
Jesus saw what was wrong with the village, how it oppressed and cast out, and he didn't walk away. He offered an alternative, the Kingdom of God, a vision where those at the margins are brought into the center. It is the duty of the village to decline and to stand up against that overstep of power that is existing out in the empire, out in the world. We must offer a radical reclaiming of identity and worth for the marginalized. We must embody the words and the actions of Jesus, saying that *you are already blessed because you are surviving.* And yet, remember that surviving is not enough, because I want you to thrive. So today is Communion Sunday, and soon, Erica is going to come up and lead us in communion. I want to say at this table, this Communion table, all of us are welcome here. This is a family dinner that everyone is invited to. This table is not one of power, it is not one of exclusion, but of remembrance. When Jesus shared this meal, he wasn't just thinking of those that were around his table. He was thinking of all of us. Because he knew that there was something wrong with the village of humanity.

So many others have followed in his footsteps, from our Indigenous ancestors to our queer elders, to those who have fought during the AIDS and HIV crises, each of them were saying with their lives, you are not alone. You are worth fighting for. So when we take the elements today, I, I don't do that casually. I do it with reverence, but also with a holy defiance. We do it in remembrance, not just of Jesus's sacrifices, but of his radical love. A love that never abandoned the village, even when the village turned against him.

Benediction

Friends, loved ones, all of my beloved children of the God that we call by many, many names. Thank you for being a part of my chosen village. I charge you today to go out, engage and embrace those people that you love and even those that may be challenging. Go and encircle all that we inhabit and all that we engage with. Blessings.

Transcribed and edited by a member of the St. Andrew's Sermon Transcription Project.



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