

FAM Vision + Child Dedication Service

The world already has a Savior — and an invitation to come stand where he stands

SPEAKER	Mandy Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, March 20, 2022
PASSAGES	Matthew 5:14-16; Exodus 4:10-14; Matthew 18:10-14; Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 10:30-37; Matthew 10:8; John 14:18; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Galatians 4:4-7
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:31:27 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Orphan care is not a campaign to end the orphan crisis, because the world already has a Savior and it is not us. It is an invitation to partner with Christ by imitating his compassion — compassion that costs time, money and comfort. And it is the clearest living picture the church can give of what God did when he refused to leave us as orphans.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ The question is not whether we can fix the orphan crisis. The world has a Savior. Our part is to represent him accurately to a watching culture.
- ◆ God did not need Moses — he had Aaron the whole time. The burning bush was an invitation into intimacy with God, not a staffing solution.
- ◆ Christ's compassion has no quota. One wandering sheep, a crowd of four thousand, a table full of tax collectors — he never runs out, and he never sorts people into us and them.
- ◆ You may not need a booming voice before you act. In the Gospels, compassion is the thing that moves Jesus, and compassion is a response to a need in front of you.
- ◆ The Samaritan paid in time, oil, wine and cash. Compassion that costs the giver nothing is not what Jesus commended.
- ◆ Believing our blessings are earned makes us clamp down on them. Our time, homes, plans and finances belong to God, which is the only reason we can give them away.

- ◆ Foster care and adoption are an exact representation of the gospel: we were orphaned, and God drafted us into his family and made us heirs.
- ◆ None of this is easy, and the ministry does not pretend otherwise. Hope's commitment is that no family goes into it alone.

► 1:31:27

A couple of months earlier Matt had asked the foster care and adoption ministry to explain to the congregation why Hope does this work at all — and specifically to distinguish it from social justice in general. Mandy Ryniker, who coordinates that ministry, came up without the head mic, admitted she was nervous, and said she felt honored to have drawn this particular Sunday: three families had just dedicated their children on the same stage. “Everything we were saying up there, I was like, yeah, that’s in my talk.” She began with her text.

“...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:14-16 ↗ (NIV)

1. What she means, and what she is not claiming

► 1:33:28

Her terms are deliberately wide. Foster care means the kind where CPS removes a child from an unsafe home. Adoption means from foster care, international, domestic, or by circumstance. And the ministry — FAM — also covers helping restore families working to reunify, and relatives raising a child in place of parents who cannot. Every one of those paths, she pointed out, runs through a decision: “you can end up becoming a biological parent on purpose or by surprise,” but each avenue through FAM “involves a choice, one that no one forces anyone to make.”

She also set down what she was not there to do. Not statistics, though she has them. Not a pitch that if we all pull together hard enough the crisis ends. Matt likes to remind her that the world is a bottomless pit of need, “and it’s helpful to remember our place in it.” Which raises the real question: what is a Christian’s responsibility in orphan care? Is it to save the world? “Good news, guys — the world already has a Savior. And it’s not me, and it’s not you. It is our Lord Jesus Christ.” Our end of the bargain is to imitate him and make him known. She was equally clear that no Christian does every good work: friends of hers live on foreign soil, another represents Christ to the high-end corporate world, and understanding those callings makes her a better sister to the people in them.

2. “Please send someone else”

► 1:38:51

Her picture of how God invites people is the long argument at the bush — and she wanted the room to feel how absurd Moses’ position is. “Literally there is a bush on fire. He is talking to a bush on fire.”

“Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” The Lord said to him, “Who gave human beings their mouths?... Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.” But Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.”

EXODUS 4:10–14 ↗ (NIV)

Aaron was already on the road. So God never needed Moses to accomplish the work — which is exactly the point. “God was inviting Moses into a deep intimacy with him by allowing him to be his spokesperson. He wanted Moses to say yes to him.” Participation in anything God is doing, she said, is an invitation to know him better. He could always use someone else. The privilege is the partnership.

3. A compassion that does not run out

► 1:40:28

Israel existed to make God known as holy and unique among the pagan cultures around them; Jesus, she noted from Colossians 1:15, is the only visible image we are given of that invisible God. So she went to the Gospels, mostly Matthew, and traced his character. He takes time for the one.

“See that you do not despise one of these little ones... if a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?... your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

MATTHEW 18:10–14 ↗ (NIV)

She would not let that stay about children only. It applies to adults who have strayed and need the protection of a good shepherd, to people inside the church and outside it, “both those that have been orphaned and the ones who are making orphans.” She works part-time in labor and delivery now, but she spent years in a step-down ICU where young, very sick patients were embarrassed by how much help they needed, and apologized to her for it. Her standing reply was that we all need a little help from time to time. “This is not us versus them. Truly this is our condition — the human condition.”

Then the compassion widens. At Matthew's table it reaches tax collectors and sinners, and the answer to the Pharisees is that the sick are exactly who a doctor is for. On a hillside it reaches a crowd of at least four thousand — "I do not want to send them away hungry". In the towns and villages it reaches people "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd", and the merciful are the ones shown mercy. Mandy was honest about the contrast: "sometimes I struggle to have compassion for my own family in my home. There are only six of them, and almost every night at like five I think — do they have to eat dinner *again?*"

Her practical conclusion is the part worth keeping. "Oftentimes I'm tempted to wait to act on something for God until I hear a very big booming voice that is very specific. I think I need to know for sure. But maybe it does not have to be that complicated." In the Gospels, compassion — a feeling, a response to a need nearby — is what moves Jesus, and because he does what his Father cares about, that feeling becomes action.

4. The Samaritan used his own donkey

► 1:45:37

Asked how to inherit eternal life, Jesus told a story in which two religious men saw a dying man and crossed the road.

"But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 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.'"

LUKE 10:30-37 ↗ (NIV)

Count what it cost him, Mandy said. His time — "I don't think that he was just walking down the road searching for beat-up people." His supplies. His animal. His money, with an open-ended promise of more. Jesus seems greatly concerned that our compassion produce actual care for the vulnerable, and his instruction was four words: go and do likewise. He lives that way himself. In Matthew 14:13-14, having just heard of John the Baptist's murder, he withdraws to a solitary place, the crowds follow him anyway, and he heals their sick. "As an introvert and a mom and a pastor's wife, I'm like, guys, stop following Jesus — I feel stressed out for him." He does not turn them away.

5. Freely you have received

► 1:49:08

He is also generous with his authority, handing it over:

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely g

So what is it we have been given to give? Every good and perfect gift is from above — which means any good thing in our hands was handed to us for his glory.

In the women’s Bible study, working through Exodus with Jen Wilkin, Mandy had hit the eighth commandment framed as stewardship: “often we wrongly believe that the good things that have come to us have come because of how good we are.” That mindset makes us clamp down. *Gosh, I worked so hard for this, I’m not willing to compromise it.* She named it as deeply embedded in our culture — “it’s kind of manifest destiny of us or something” — and not a kingdom principle. All of it belongs to God: our time, our plans, our finances, our homes, our families. Matt had preached recently on the riches of heaven and the fact that they never run out.

Her illustration came from having seen *Frozen* roughly eight thousand times. Anna is climbing a cliff face toward her sister, slips, and Kristoff instinctively catches her and sets her down in the snow — and she brushes herself off and calls it some sort of crazy trust exercise. “So for me I just think: wow, what will I have the privilege of seeing God do when I trust him to his word in some sort of crazy trust exercise?”

6. “I will not leave you as orphans”

► 1:52:35

Her first closing question was whether this is the God you actually know — whether you have been on the receiving end of it. Just as marriage reflects Christ and the church, orphan care has the privilege of being an exact representation of what God has done for his people. Telling his disciples he will not be with them much longer, and describing the home his Father has prepared, Jesus says:

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

JOHN 14:18 ↗ (NIV)

Have you been homeless, or without the love of a family, or alienated and far off? In Christ we have been drafted in. We have a place, a family, protection; the striving and fending for ourselves falls away. We were “not a people” who had not received mercy, now the people of God, built like living stones into a spiritual house. And the mechanism was adoption:

“God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship... So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”

GALATIANS 4:4–7 ↗ (NIV)

This is what orphan care mirrors, she said, and she listed the mirrors precisely: speaking truth; offering grace and patience to a parent struggling to provide safely for their children; giving physically and financially and extending love that may or may not be reciprocated — “I’m just telling you right now” — by the children in your care; taking a child into your home forever to say *you are mine and you belong*; stepping in for a relative’s child. And nobody is conscripted. “Sometimes there’s that idea that if you’re a foster family CPS will show up on your door. They always ask you. You can say no. No one makes you say yes.”

7. This is not easy

► 1:57:30

Her second closing thought was a correction to anything that had sounded romantic. Christ is perfectly compassionate and generous; we are not, and these circumstances will find the end of us. It is hard to offer compassion to parents who do not show up for visits while their children wait anxiously. It is hard to open your home to an inspector who will nitpick how you parent and how you store your cleaning supplies. And when a child is screaming without stopping because of trauma done to them through no fault of their own, and has no way to regulate “because their brains are on fire” — she spoke from firsthand experience — “it is very hard to keep your cool and act like Christ.”

8. Nobody goes alone

► 1:58:33

Which is the mission statement. “We are not asking you to go alone — just like we don’t load missionaries up on planes and dust off our hands and say, well, they chose to do a really hard thing, godspeed.” FAM is committed to praying for these families, helping with logistics, meeting together to share triumphs and “our very, very real failures,” holding hope in spaces that feel utterly broken, teaching the wider church how the systems work, and helping families stand when it is awful.

For everyone else she was concrete: pray, make meals, hold safe space for venting, welcome children and youth you do not recognize — including ones with difficult behavior — into the building, extend fellowship to adults who may find a home at Hope because their kids were cared for well, and draw the

quiet or the overly active kid back into the group in children's ministry "a thousand times, and don't give up." Be patient with the foster and adoptive parents in the congregation who may be at the end of their rope over things most people never think about: CPS visits, caseworkers, mandated appointments, tests, therapies, and an inherited set of biological parents who are strangers to you and now part of your family. Then ask your own household whether there is room at your table.

► 2:02:22

She ended with what she called a burning dream, almost a prophetic prayer — that when orphan care comes up in the political and civic rooms where people sit down and ask what is to be done about it, someone would say: "Oh, well, that's what the Christians do. The Christians take care of that." Not because Hope is the church of really nice people. "I think you all are nice, but it's not our main thing." Because when the church does this well, the world notices — and that is her text, closing the circle: they will see our good works and praise our Father in heaven. The FAM team — Melinda, Mark and Adrian — stood up with her; there is a web page and an Instagram account, and the next church-wide event was set for May.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- [Matthew 5:14–16](#) (NIV)
- [Exodus 4:10–14](#) (NIV)
- [Colossians 1:15](#)
- [Matthew 18:10–14](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 9:10–13](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 15:32](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 9:35–36](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 5:7](#) (NIV)
- [Luke 10:30–37](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 14:13–14](#) (NIV)
- [Matthew 10:8](#) (NIV)
- [James 1:17](#) (NIV)
- [Exodus 20:15](#) (NIV)
- [John 14:18](#) (NIV)
- [1 Peter 2:4–10](#) (NIV)
- [Galatians 4:4–7](#) (NIV)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Mandy said the world already has a Savior, and it isn't us. Where have you been carrying a need as though its outcome depended on you?
2. God had Aaron before Moses ever answered. How does that change what it means when God invites you into something he could accomplish without you?
3. She suggested compassion — not a booming voice — is usually what moves us to act. What need in front of you have you been waiting for more confirmation about?
4. The Samaritan spent his own time, supplies and money. What would it cost you to actually help the person you thought of while she was talking?
5. "I will not leave you as orphans." Name one concrete thing you will do this week for a family in this church that is fostering, adopting or raising a relative's child.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mandy Ryniker coordinates Hope Chapel's foster care and adoption ministry (FAM), a volunteer role she was given by Gino shortly before COVID shut most of it down. She works part-time as a labor and delivery nurse — “I literally hold babies for a living” — after years in a step-down ICU, and she attends the women's Bible study working through Exodus. She describes herself as an introvert, a mom and a pastor's wife. She and her husband Matt, Hope's senior pastor, have four biological children, a current foster placement, and a baby on the way.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXUiPba6qIM&t=5487s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.