



Rev. Dr. Tommy Goode
Church Growth and Health Consultant
www.mid-america-disciples.org/available-consultants
tommygoode@gmail.com
417.860.3471 (voice/text)

Flourishing 2023

'Well done, good and faithful servant!
(Matthew 25:21 (NET))

Lessons from The Jesus' File

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

(Matthew 25:34-26 NIV)

How do we serve Jesus? This question has been expressed throughout the Christian centuries in many and various ways and means. However, it seems quite clear in the closing chapters of the Matthean gospel of Jesus, it is expressed in acts of social justice and compassion ministry – not in how big the choir or building or budget or Facebook followers... but in the real life touch from those who have come to see the face of Jesus in the poor, needy, lonely, abused, broken, battered, bullied, migrant neighbor-person in need. It might just follow that a can of beans given in Jesus' name is a more fitting witness than a megaphone on a street corner.

I spent decades as a missionary helping advocate and provide resources for those in social and economic need. For example, I developed advocacy ministries to persons with AIDS in Arkansas – regional response ministries to the endemic multi-generational poverty of the US Delta Region, Appalachia, Texas, Central America, and Puerto Rico. I coordinated regional response ministries to the Central US Migrant Farmworker Stream – free healthcare ministries to underserved populations. I worked collaboratively with multi-denominational and community-based organizations. Mainly, I worked under the mandate of compassion and care reflected in the Gospel according to Matthew with any who shared that mandate. My takeaway is that little if anything will happen without organized mobilization of justice and compassion ministries to those best identified circumstantially as "neighbors-in-need."

I think it is clear to me that actions speak louder than words, and that Jesus is calling us out to be justice responders and compassion caregivers and caretakers when we encounter our neighbors-in-need regardless of their politics, religion, gender, age, nationality, or any other identifier – just 'cause! I am encouraged to serve among churches that put actions and deeds to rhetoric – "walk the talk." Love God, Love People is about the actionable verb to "love" as well as the unifying object "God-People." Perhaps we should do a re-set on the Advent Season to affirm the Incarnation by sharing what we have with those neighbors in need. In a fractured world, let's practice peacemaking by practicing the discipline of helping.

Join with me in celebrating our heritage and our vision as "People of the Chalice."
LOVE GOD! LOVE PEOPLE!

-end-