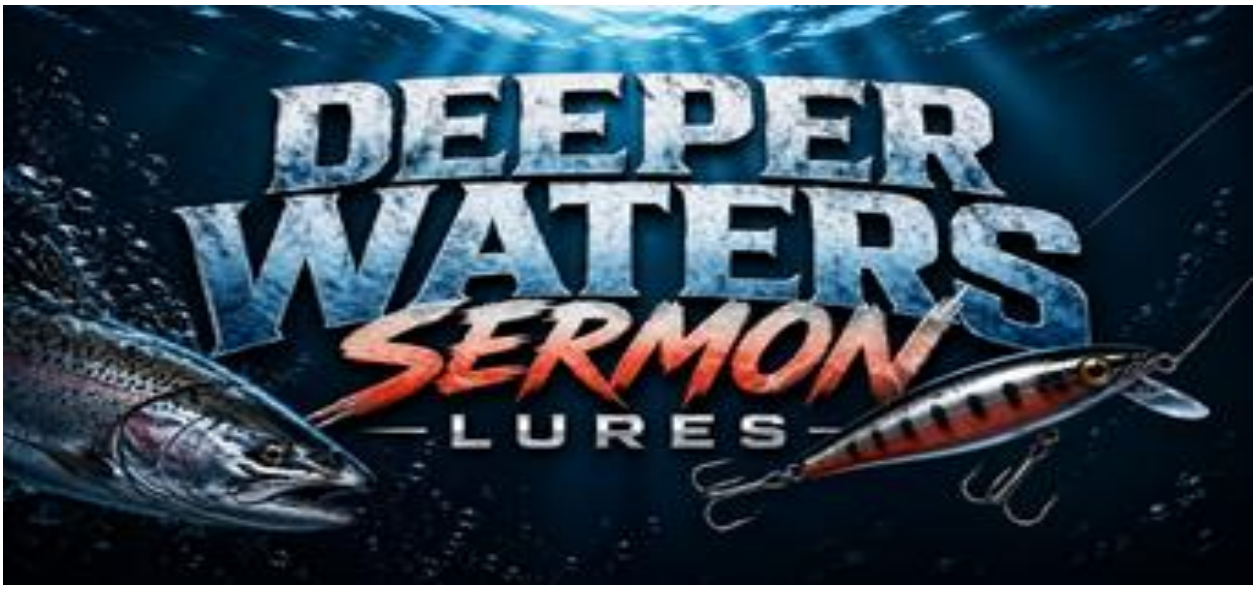


KNOW IT!

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus reminds us that where we stand—and with whom we choose to stand—reveals much about our faith and our willingness to love and serve others. While we often draw lines that divide people into categories of right and wrong, worthy and unworthy, insiders and outsiders, Jesus consistently crosses those lines to stand with the lonely, the lost, the hurting, and the forgotten. As followers of Christ, we are called not merely to attend church but to **BE the Church** by feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, caring for the sick, helping those in need, and standing against injustice. Rather than judging who deserves God's love and grace, we are invited to extend the same compassion, forgiveness, and generosity that Christ has shown us. Ultimately, the question is not simply what we believe, but how our faith shapes the choices we make and the lives we touch. **As we respond to God's grace in our own lives, where we choose to stand today matters—because Jesus calls us to stand with Him by standing with those who need us most.**

READ IT!

- **Luke 10:25–37 — The Parable of the Good Samaritan** The Samaritan refuses to let religious and cultural divisions determine who deserves compassion. This parable challenges us to become *line crossers rather than line drawers*. Thestion isn't merely "Who is my neighbor?" but "Am I willing to BE a neighbor?"
- **Galatians 3:26–28 — All Are One in Christ Jesus** The sermon emphasizes that Jesus crosses boundaries that human beings continually construct. Paul reminds us that our shared identity in Christ transcends the labels that separate us. The ground at the foot of the cross is level. No one stands above another in their need for God's grace.

- **The Selfish Giant — Oscar Wilde (1888)** A giant builds a wall around his beautiful garden to keep children out. But when he excludes them, winter settles permanently over his property. Only when the children return does spring return as well. Eventually, the giant discovers that love and hospitality bring life, while selfishness and exclusion leave us spiritually impoverished.

- **The Last Leaf — O. Henry (1907)** In this moving story, a young woman named Johnsy becomes gravely ill and loses the will to live. She becomes convinced that she will die when the last leaf falls from a vine outside her window. An elderly artist named Behrman secretly paints a remarkably realistic leaf on the wall during a terrible storm. Believing the leaf has survived, Johnsy regains hope. Tragically, Behrman contracts pneumonia after his exposure to the storm and dies. Behrman does not simply offer encouraging words. He puts himself at risk to restore hope to someone who has nearly given up.

WATCH IT!

- **Wonder (2017) — Choosing kindness over judgment.** Auggie Pullman, a boy with facial differences, enters a mainstream school where classmates must decide whether to exclude him because of his appearance or welcome him as a friend. The story illustrates how compassion begins when we look beyond outward differences and recognize another person's dignity.
- **A Man Called Otto (2022) — Discovering grace through unexpected neighbors.** Otto is a grieving, isolated widower whose carefully controlled world is interrupted by a warm, persistent family moving in across the street. Their kindness gradually breaks through his emotional barriers, and he begins rediscovering the value of human connection and mutual care.
- **The Art of Neighboring (2020) — RightNow Media video curriculum.** This four-session study by Dave Runyon and Jay Pathak explores what it means to take Jesus' command to love our neighbors seriously. It addresses the fear, busyness, and personal barriers that prevent us from developing meaningful relationships with people living right around us.

LIVE IT!

- **Cross a Line — Reach Out to Someone Different** This week, intentionally connect with someone you might ordinarily overlook, avoid, or disagree with. Invite a neighbor for coffee, introduce yourself to someone new, or listen respectfully to someone whose experiences or perspectives differ from yours.
- **Change Where You Stand — Choose Compassion Over Judgment** When you catch yourself making assumptions about someone based on their appearance, circumstances, beliefs, or choices, intentionally reconsider your perspective. Imagine walking in their shoes. Offer understanding before criticism, grace before judgment, and kindness before condemnation.