

**Series: For All the Saints**  
**Sermon: Amy Carmichael**

**I Corinthians 3:8-17**

The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

**Sermon**

I love doing weddings. And I remember this one wedding couple: This isn't breaking confidences - I won't share names or dates or location - but this is sometime in the last 20 years of ministry. Nice young couple, he had a 4 year old daughter from another relationship but this was the first marriage for the both of them. I was doing premarital counseling with them and before one session, I had a call from the bride to be. She asked if, sometime during this next session, if I could talk about bachelor parties. Knowing there's gotta be a story behind this, I asked why? There was a party planned. The boys were going to throw the groom a humdinger of a shindig. And a part of the festivities including dancing. By a paid for entertainer. And they paid her extra so there may be extra curricular activities at this party. Obviously, the bride had reservations about this, but the groom to be thought, I'm not married yet - everything is still game. At the session, I brought up bachelor parties and he got a grin. Oh yeah, there was a party on the way. So I told him my rule about bachelor parties. Now, I really don't have a rule about bachelor parties, but I thought I'd take an old old rule and modify it for this context. Maybe you've heard this old old rule, and you can help me finish it, "Do unto others . . . (As you would have them do unto you.). Bachelor Party version: Whatever happens to you at your bachelor party, you should have no problem if the equivalent thing happens to your fiancé at her bachelorette party. His smile went away. "She wouldn't do that to me," he said, "we're engaged. Anyone who touches my bride has to answer to me." It's not eloquent, or very pastorally enlightening, but the only thing I could say was "Huh." Hoping that the hypocrisy sets in just a little. And he continued. He didn't stop, he kept digging his hole a little deeper. "And there's nothing wrong," he said, "about having a dancer at a party". It's a legal profession. So for fun, I agreed with him. "You're right, you're totally right. But, if it's a totally fine profession, nothing wrong with it, then remember this: When your 4 year old daughter grows up, and wants to go into pole dancing, you'd better be OK with it, because it's a totally fine and legal profession in your words." He said (not with a smile), "I would kill anyone who would treat my daughter like that." Huh. I found out later that the party was cancelled, and they went golfing instead. Do unto others isn't so much about being kind and nice to each other, but more about social customs, norms, justice, oppression and marginalizing many in our population. It's all fine and good as the oppressor, but not so much for the oppressee.

This was the world of Amy Carmichael - who chose to look at those on the other side of the tracks and not turn a blind eye. Amy was born in 1867 in Ireland - her father worked the mill and the mom doing everything she could to raise the 7 children. This was potato famine time - when many Irish made their way to America. Amy had dark eyes, and she really wanted blue. So as a young child, she prayed everyday for blue eyes. She would pinch her little brothers cheeks really hard to get him to have rosy cheeks and bring out the blue in his eyes, but she repented every time she did that - they were a strict presbyterian family. When she was 16, they moved to Belfast, Ireland (It was just Ireland at this point no split yet). Her father soon passed away, putting much strain on the family finances, but they tried to keep appearances as much as possible. But age 18, Amy did something she wasn't supposed to do. They were walking home from church, her and her brothers in their Sunday best. And they passed an old woman, poor with tattered clothing, shuffling along the street with a heavy load on her aged shoulders. In that moment, Amy chose to break with custom - and she offered to help this dirty stranger. Amy recounted it like this: "It meant facing all other respectable people, who were, like ourselves, on their way home. It was a horrid moment. We hated doing it. Crimson all over. It doesn't sound weird to us, but back then, certain folk didn't mingle with certain folk. I'm glad that kind of thing doesn't happen now. As they plodded along, they walked past an ornate Victorian Fountain bedazzled with beautiful rock and colored glass - a striking contrast to the spectacle that they had become. And through her mind, she said, a scripture verse was spoken as if someone was whispering in her ear: Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble - everyman's work shall be made manifest; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is . . ." She turned to see who spoke the words, but no one was there. Translation: The scales of justice wait to see your actions. Did you do the work Jesus laid before you, or are you found wanting?

After that day, Amy looked for opportunities to serve the forgotten. And she didn't have to look very hard. She had the neighborhood girls over for Bible study - study that grew into classes that grew into something larger than she had ever hoped. They even had to get rooms at the Presbyterian Church to house them all. And then she invited, Can I hear a gasp? The poor factory girls. Respectable people wondered why Amy's mother allowed her to do this. Soon, Amy's "Mill Girl's Society" took off. This mission grew and grew until they needed a hall to seat 500 people. At this time Amy saw an advertisement in The Christian, for an iron hall that could be erected for £500 and would seat 500 people. Two donations, £500 from a generous donor as well as one plot of land from a mill owner, led to the erection of the first "Welcome Hall". Hundreds of girls found peace and love and value through these doors. You want to change the world for a class of individuals? Education - and let them know they're valuable.

This ministry and its success would have been enough for anybody. But Amy found her heart yearning to go. Go ye into all the world. At a time when missionary work was better left to the men - or so they thought. First to Japan, then to Ceylon. And finally, she found herself in India. For the next fifty years she would work in the poverty stricken world of India's crowded cities. More often than not, people would shun her, didn't want to hear about her book or her Jesus. Turns out, most were scared that the prevailing beliefs of deity devil-Gods would harm them if they even listened. But she persisted. She had some success, helping little children read and write, an intelligent conversation with a Hindu and their family, bright spots here and there. But for whatever reason, she felt called to help the forgotten girls of Bangalore.

You see, there were temples scattered throughout the city, and in the service of the temple were the temple girls. The temples were mainly funded thru forced prostitution. Thousands of abandoned girls were left at the temple from a family who didn't want girls. No secret about it, this was just the way it was. Amy's ministry with them started by accident. A seven year old girl escaped the temple and went back to her family, only to have her hands branded in punishment before being dragged back - but she was able to escape her own parents and somehow found her way to Amy's door. And soon, another girl escaped and came to Amy. And then another. "Child Stealer" she was called. And soon she had to decide if she wanted to do either evangelism, or as she put it, nursemaid. She came to believe she could do both. Sometimes the Sunday clothes need to be dirtied.

Sometimes you can find gold in the dust and dirt on someone's face. They soon had 1,000 kids trying to escape what we would call human trafficking, what they would call hell. Respecting Indian culture, members of the organization wore Indian dress and gave the rescued children Indian names. Carmichael herself dressed in Indian clothes, dyed her skin with dark coffee, and often traveled long distances on India's hot, dusty roads to save just one child from suffering. The native population didn't trust outsiders. She later recalled that all of this ministry probably wouldn't have happened if she had blue eyes.

While serving in India, Amy received a letter from a young lady who was considering life as a missionary. She asked Amy, "What is missionary life like?" Amy wrote back saying simply, "Missionary life is simply a chance to die." Nonetheless, in 1912 Queen Mary recognized the missionary's work, and helped fund a hospital at the school. Her example as a missionary inspired others - including Jim Elliot (last week's saint).

What she fought against is still with us. Human trafficking. Here are the not-so-fun stats: Globally, the average cost of a slave is \$90. Trafficking primarily involves exploitation which comes in many forms, including: forcing victims into prostitution, subjecting victims to slavery or involuntary servitude and compelling victims to commit sex acts for the purpose of creating pornography. Much of today's internet porn showcases, not willing actors, but slaves. There are approximately 20 to 30 million slaves in the world today. According to the U.S. State Department, 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year, of which 80% are female and half are children. The average age a teen enters the sex trade in the U.S. is 12 to 14-year-old. Many victims are runaway girls who were sexually abused as children. The National Human Trafficking Hotline receives more calls from Texas than any other state in the US. Thousands upon thousands of people are trafficked into the U.S. each year. Human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry (behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking). It generates a profit of \$32 billion every year. Of that number, \$15.5 billion is made in industrialized countries - countries that should know better.

What is wrong with us? Just in watching the news, is every politician and actor a monster? I for one am glad that the world is shining a little bit of light into these dark places. What can we do? I don't know, how about Do unto others . . . Just a thought. 15-20% of American men have paid for favors at some point. And over half of those Johns in a recent study believe that the female was coerced, trafficked or underage. But that's the business. Even in Portland, Oregon, around 100 kids a year are saved from this life. We've lost respect for each other. For ourselves. And I get to explain to my daughter why the world is unfair to people of her gender. Only 6% of the top 500 companies have a female CEO - the highest its ever been.

I love what some Scandinavian countries, even Canada is trying. Think back to tv shows that have court room or police station scenes. I'll show my age: I'm thinking Night Court or even Barney Miller. And in the background of the police station scenes there were generally ladies of the night who got picked up for what they do. Never the guys, just the ladies getting booked. Well, Sweden and some other countries are flipping that around. It's not illegal to sell services, but it is illegal to purchase services. They understand who the real victim is. To hire someone is now sexual abuse. They say that this sort of crime is waaaaay down because now it is the purchaser who gets booked, and not the seller.

I do believe a new day is dawning, although it can take continued generations for us the genders to be equal and treat each other with respect. But there is hope. Everyday, new strides are being made. And more and more behavior that was once common place is being called out. And its about time. And we'll need the saints around us to continue the work of justice, equality and love. Here's one story of what our church is doing in Armenia VIDEO.

Of course, we have work being done all across the world. When Ebola hit Liberia a couple of years ago and killed thousands, the United Methodist Church kept track of hundreds of orphans, who otherwise might have

been trafficked. Even here. Churches in Florida and Texas and California and other places where this is more epidemic are seeking out the stolen people. Raising awareness, freeing slaves.

Amy Carmichael died in India in 1951 at the age of 83. She asked that no stone be put over her grave. Remember that big fancy ornate fountain that was so represented the stark realities between the haves and have nots back when she was 18? At her grave site, the children she had cared for put a simple bird bath over it with the single inscription "Amma", which means "mother." Mother of the forgotten and discarded. May we not only care for the least of these - but also stop contributing to the creation of the least of these. And the family of God said. . .