

As the book, Advent Conspiracy, was being put together, some of those involved with the book traveled to a village in Africa with a team from Living Water International which is a nonprofit that digs fresh water wells. The people showed them their well which was next to a swamp that was full of disease. The women would brush away the film that was on top of the water as they filled their water jars.

As they visited with the elders of the village, they heard about the people who had recently died from the water including the son of one of the elders. The faces of the elders were somber and hopeless and it seemed like they were resigned to burying their children because they could not fix the water.

Well the group from the United States were excited because they had planned to raise the funds to dig a new well in this particular village and so they shared their message of hope. The translator shared the message with a lot of passion and the village people just stood there and did not share any excitement.

Of course this confused the Americans and so they asked the villagers if they had understood the message. And they responded, "Others have made promises in the name of this Jesus, but they were never kept." The words offered no hope because the words were empty.

Is it possible for people to believe that they can tell people that God loves them without being an active participant in that love? I actually do think that happens now but not always on purpose. Sometimes we are so focused on what happens after people die that we don't pay attention to the life they are living now.

Let's be honest. God has chosen us as HIS disciples which means that we are to love and care for all. In order to do that, we must act on what we say. We cannot just say that we believe in God and how HE broke into our world and then live like God doesn't exist.

When we live what we proclaim, then our life follows Matthew 25:34-40.

³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and

visited you?”⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Jesus lays it all out right there. We are called to love and serve all people. We live in a very cynical world, and I will admit that I can also be cynical. In fact, I think we all can be cynical from time to time. This fact alone is why so many people have heard way to many empty words.

They have hear of a God who supposedly loves all people and then we add in the exceptions. The last I knew, God died for all and offers forgiveness and eternal life to all. That's it. All people receive the same promises from Jesus and yet there seems to be quite a few exceptions to those promises or even means of grace in which God reaches out to us.

As one example, I will share a story about my pastor. He died around 10 or so years ago so I am guessing about 15 years ago, he started denying communion to certain people. I will tell you that I did not understand how he could do this as a pastor, but he refused to commune couples who were living together outside of marriage.

I do not believe that his communion rule was part of the church's constitution but he did deny people communion because of it. But what difference is it if you refuse something to somebody who lives with another outside of marriage or who is a different color than you, or is the opposite sex, or who is too young or too old, or who makes more or less money than you, or is a different denomination or doesn't even believe in God.

When we discriminate or persecute anyone, we are not loving them as God loves them. If we are more concerned with our wants than the needs of others, then we are not loving them as God loves them. If we are not willing to help another, even though we are able to help, then we are not loving them as God loves them.

The way we love others does make a difference. If our love for others is filled with empty words, then people aren't going to get excited when we talk of God's love for them. But on the other hand, if our actions back up our words in describing God's love for all, then the world will take notice of what we do. The location of our actions doesn't matter: we could do ministry for somebody in the third-world or we can help the lady down the street. God's love is proclaimed through it all.