

Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, March 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.

Title: Beatitude 2–Getting Help (The Hope Choice)
– The Road to Recovery Sermon Series

Let me begin with a question: Have you known people close to you—whether family members, friends, neighbors, or co-workers—who have struggled with addiction? We might be surprised at how many people are affected by various forms of dependence. I used to think addiction only affected people from dysfunctional families. However, the longer I live in this sin-darkened world, the more I realize that addiction touches many lives regardless of background. Whether we admit it or not, all of us may be tempted—or even addicted to—something harmful in one way or another. We all have areas of brokenness in our lives, in some cases, spiritual bondage. That is why I believe addiction can happen to anyone.

Before we move on to the main part of today’s message, I’d like to make one more point about addiction. In my view, there are two primary perspectives on this issue.

The first perspective is that addiction can be seen as a psychological disorder. For example, alcohol addiction—or any type of harmful habit—can be viewed as a disease. I have heard that many alcoholics “don’t know when or how to stop drinking” without the right help and treatment. Like an untreated disease, if compulsive behaviors such as excessive drinking or drug abuse are not addressed, they can lead to serious, even life-threatening consequences. As you may agree, nobody wants to choose to have a disease. Please understand, I am not defending those who are addicted, but I am emphasizing that the symptoms of addiction need to be treated.

The second perspective is that addiction cannot be classified as a disease because it is rooted in personal choices. According to this view, people who are addicted initially choose to engage in harmful behaviors, whether out of temptation or force. In some ways, this argument is understandable. After all, some physical diseases are often the result of personal choices, such as poor diet or lack of exercise. However, once a person is exposed to addictive substances or behaviors, they can lose the ability to make conscious, reasonable, or right decisions. Over time, they may find it incredibly difficult to stop on their own.

That is why I believe a combined perspective is best when it comes to understanding addiction. It can be seen both a treatable disease and the result of unfortunate personal choices. In light of the fact that addiction is a disease or psychological disorder, we need to consider how we care for those who are severely addicted. If someone we love were diagnosed with a serious disease, we would likely ask others to think of them and pray for their healing and recovery. We would not be ashamed of the fact that our loved one is ill. Yet, when it comes to addiction, many of us—myself included—often keep it quiet or even hide it. We may feel uncomfortable about how others will react, or we simply do not want people to know that someone close to us is dealing with addiction.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I don't understand what I do. As I mentioned last Sunday, the Apostle Paul describes the state of my mind: "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:19). For your reference, the background of this inner struggle is that Paul wrote these words before he met Jesus and accepted Him as his Savior. Despite the timing of his confession, the general concept of the struggles between our two sides—the pull toward good and the pull toward evil—remains relevant both to those who have not yet encountered Jesus and to those who follow Him as their Lord. And in Romans 3:23, Paul writes, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, we all fall short of "God's glorious standard." No one in this sanctuary—or those joining us via Zoom—is immune to the painful reality of addiction. Once again, somehow or another, we have all done things we are embarrassed about. Addiction is not just physical, mental, or emotional—it is spiritual, too. On our own, we cannot escape it. In fact, the harder we try to break free with our own strength, the more trapped we feel.

When we are addicted to something, we don't just waste time, gifts, and resources, or damage our relationships with those we love most. We lose our true identity as children of God, as parents, as friends. We even destroy the beautiful, holy image we were created to reflect. Addiction has the power to transform us into strangers—people our loved ones hardly recognize. This is why this sermon series is for all of us. We all need recovery from our spiritual illness in one way or another.

Last Sunday, we looked at the history of one of the most well-known recovery organizations, Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), and its 12-step program. We also studied the background of Jesus' Eight Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. Both teachings are part of our sermon series, *The Road to Recovery*. A.A.'s first step states, "We admitted that we were powerless over our problems—that our lives had become unmanageable." In the first Beatitude, Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). Both statements point to a critical truth: the Reality Choice. It is the choice to recognize that we are not God and to admit that we are powerless over our spiritual bondage. This is the starting point of the Road to Recovery. Without acknowledging our helplessness and hopelessness in overcoming our issues, we cannot move forward or change the problems we face. We must humbly admit that we need help; otherwise, our lives will remain out of control.

Today, we are moving on to the second step of spiritual recovery: the Hope Choice. It is the choice to "earnestly believe that God exists," that we matter to Him, and that He has the power to help us change. This step is based on Jesus' second Beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) phrases this second step as, "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Since A.A. is designed for anyone in recovery, I believe that "a Power greater than ourselves" could refer to any god who offers more strength than our own. However, in a spiritual sense, I want to clarify that, with all respect, "a Power greater than ourselves" ultimately comes from God. Simply believing in something more powerful than us is not enough.

In our Epistle today, the Apostle Paul defines Christian faith as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). There are those who

struggle to believe in God's creation because they don't fully understand it. But without faith, it is impossible to understand how God designed all of creation. This is why the Bible says, "By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Hebrews 11:3). Someone once said, "When faith comes first, understanding will follow."

In today's Old Testament reading, Genesis 1:1 clearly states the origin of life: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The word "create" in this passage means "to make something new or to make something out of nothing." Nobody creates something new without materials or tools, but God created everything—absolutely everything—out of nothing! One interesting point I noticed in Genesis 1:2 is the description of the earth before God began His work. It says, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep..." Does this sound familiar? It is a picture of one of the symptoms of addiction. The earth, before God's creative work, was "formless and empty"—everything was chaotic and disordered. In the same way, without God, our lives can feel unstructured and meaningless. But God, in His power, brought order out of disorder, light out of darkness.

I have mentioned before that, without God's intervention, everything moves from order to chaos. Have you ever wondered what would happen if God were not in control of the universe? What would become of this world? The reason I bring this up again is because this principle does not only apply to the natural world—it also applies to our spiritual lives. Without an intimate relationship with the Creator, we may feel that our lives are "formless and empty." Our circumstances may seem disordered, and the situations of those we love may appear chaotic, with no solution or hope in sight.

But when we place our lives—and the lives of those we love—into the hands of our Creator, the Almighty God can restore order out of the mess. When we believe in God's power, accept Him as our Creator, and trust Him with all our hearts, He can bring order and shine light into our lives. As followers of Christ, we not only believe that God exists, but we also believe that He "rewards those earnestly seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Part of God's reward is the restoration of our lives from spiritual bondage—if we sincerely repent and put our full trust in Him. Earnest belief in God and His power to help us recover from spiritual bondage is the second step of the Road to Recovery.

Before we go any further, I'd like to add one more thought about addiction recovery. Some of us may ask, "Why are so many people—even many Christians—addicted to something harmful?" Remember, as children of God, we are not immune to temptation or addiction. Even though we believe in the Supreme Power and accept that God is able to fully restore His image in us, we are not automatically recovered. We must surrender ourselves to God regularly, both in our actions and in our thoughts.

In the Beatitude for today, Jesus provides the second principle in the Road to Recovery: "Blessed are those who mourn..." (Matthew 5:4). The concept of mourning seems to contrast with the topic of happiness. When we read the Word of God prayerfully, we see the importance of grieving. For instance, in the days of Noah, God regretted creating humanity because He saw that "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). It says that "His heart was deeply troubled" (Genesis

6:6). I believe God was weeping when He saw the corruption of the earth and the wickedness of its people (Genesis 6:11). That, I think, was one of the saddest moments in the history of creation—when God decided to destroy both the earth and its people, except for Noah and his family (Genesis 6:13).

When the Apostle Paul, a righteous man in the New Testament, found himself a wretched sinner, he cried out to God in desperation (Romans 7:21-25). He admitted that he had done many wrong things, even though he knew what was right and wanted to do good. While mourning over his spiritual bondage, Paul asked God to rescue him from his sinful nature. Paul thanked God when he was forgiven through repentance and faith, and he encouraged his followers to mourn over the wickedness of their own hearts.

Sometimes we think that human corruption and God's judgment only happened in the Old and New Testament eras. But whether we recognize it or not, this kind of human wickedness continues in our world today. Before we partake in the Lord's Supper, we need to humbly examine our hearts through the Word of God and mourn the sins we have committed against Him and against others. As we prepare to observe Holy Communion, we also need to ask ourselves honestly: Do we have God's heart? Are we mourning the spiritual bondage in our own hearts? Have we grieved over our own sins? As I mentioned earlier, just as full recovery from addiction is not a one-time decision but a lifelong, ongoing process, repentance is not a single event to be done before observing communion. This process of crying out in repentance should continue throughout our lives, until we are called to be with the Lord.

In our Psalm for today, the Psalmist describes this spiritual mourning by comparing "sowing with tears" and "reaping with songs of joy" in nature. (Psalm 126:5). The word "joy" is repeated six times in this passage, emphasizing its importance. The background of this story is the return of the people of Israel to Jerusalem, their hometown, after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. Thanks to a special decree from King Cyrus, the captives were suddenly set free and made their way back to Jerusalem to worship God in the temple. During their time in captivity, I believe the Israelites mourned over their disobedience and prayed for God to restore their identity as His royal priesthood.

In God's perfect timing, the Israelites were overjoyed when their dream came true—much like farmers who, after planting seeds and tending to them with tears, joyfully harvest their crops. The God who did great things for the people of Israel is the same God we believe in today. Sometimes, the good results of our heartfelt work for our loved ones take longer to come than we expect. Are we feeling anxious or disappointed because the prayers we have lifted up to God for those in need of recovery seem to be delayed? Once again, we must remember that the Lord, our mighty and merciful God, will do great things for us and our loved ones—just as He has done beautiful things for us in the past. But we must continue doing what is right for ourselves and our loved ones before Him, working diligently with hearts fully committed—even if it means sowing with tears.

In the proclamation of the prophet Isaiah this morning, we learn about the difference between God's power and our own willpower. Isaiah says, "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth... He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and

fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles..." (Isaiah 40:28-31). Isaiah proclaimed supernatural strength and divine hope to the people of Israel, who had lost their identity as God's chosen people and had been captive in a foreign land for a long time. From this scripture, we find the image of a bird, and this illustration helps us distinguish between God's authority and our own. Sometimes God's power is like an eagle, while our power is more like a hummingbird... How does the eagle do that? The eagle soars because God designed its wings with the strength to carry it to these remarkable heights. Here's the truth for us: it is not about us trying to hope on our own. It is about us saying, "God, I need You. I can't do this on my own. I trust You. I trust You moment by moment." This is the second step of spiritual recovery: we choose to trust God, the One who has the power and strength to change us.

Friends, what burdens are we carrying today? What are the major issues that wear us down in our lives? Addictive behaviors often rob us of happiness and rest. Let us take a moment to reflect on our own spiritual bondage. There is no "big" or "small" sin before God. This morning, Jesus invites each of us—who are discouraged or disappointed—to come to Him just as we are. He promises us peace and joy for our souls when we develop a deeper relationship with God, who loves us and cares for us more than we can imagine. God is our Father, "full of mercy and all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

I firmly believe that God will do His part, and He also wants us to do ours. Let us commit all of our being into Christ's care and control—over and over again, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. There is sure hope for us when we continue choosing repentance for our wrongdoings and placing our complete trust in the Creator. Our Compassionate God, with His supernatural power, can and will restore the broken areas of our lives and the lives of our loved ones. Our Almighty God can and will bring order to every area of our lives, comforting each of us and our loved ones with true happiness and peace—in His time and in His way.

**In preparing this sermon series, I have drawn on materials and insights from various ministers, particularly those related to the Twelve Steps of A.A. as well as the "Life's Healing Choices" series prepared by Rick Warren and his team.*