

Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, March 15, 2026

“The Good News Is... Protection and Care for the Vulnerable”

Young at Heart Message

I looked up the word “vulnerable” to see what the official definition of the word is prior to writing my sermon today.

Oxford defines the word “vulnerable” as **“susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm.”**

So, with that in mind, I would like to ask you all: Who do you consider to be among the vulnerable in the world today?

We have created a pretty good list of people we consider vulnerable.

Do you see yourself on this list in some way or another?

Do you see people you know – family, friends, neighbours, or anyone else you interact with regularly?

Of course, because we have all felt vulnerable at some point in our lives. At the very least, we were all children once – a season in life in which we are incredibly vulnerable.

But, when we don't feel vulnerable, we can forget what it feels like to *be* vulnerable.

Once we grow into adulthood, we tend to forget the vulnerable feeling of being a child, for example.

And of course, there are many on this list we created that will always be or feel vulnerable, at least until our culture shifts.

This is just as true now as it was when Jesus was here on Earth and when Moses spoke prophetically to Israel as well.

The Message

The thing about vulnerability is that we all experience it at points throughout our lives.

As children, we are in an incredibly vulnerable position. We haven't learned enough about the world yet to have "street smarts," if you will, so we can be easily taken advantage of if there is no one around to protect us.

The same can be true as we reach the golden years of our lives.

Older adults are also in a more vulnerable position, for a variety of reasons.

But the same is true for immigrants, for those with physical or mental impairments, for anyone who has lost a spouse, for the poor, and for so many other people.

And, we can move in and out of vulnerable positions throughout our lives.

At the end of the day, what we all need to remember is that none of us are immune to feeling vulnerable, and it can happen at any point in our life.

We might be feeling strong and invincible, until we get a cancer diagnosis.

We might be feeling on top of the world until we lose our job due to downsizing.

On the other hand, we might have pulled ourselves out of poverty or out of living paycheque to paycheque, and now we are comfortable and further removed from those feelings of financial vulnerability.

Maybe we have been in remission from cancer for 10 years and we've left behind some of our feelings of physical vulnerability.

The point I'm trying to make is that as we live *our* lives in whatever position we are in among society, we must remember that we have been on the receiving end of vulnerability.

This is exactly what Moses is reminding his people of in the Deuteronomy passage we heard today.

"You were slaves in Egypt until the Lord your God rescued you."

"You lived in poverty as slaves in Egypt until the Lord your God rescued you."

In other words, remember your vulnerability when you interact with others who are vulnerable *now*.

It can be easy for humans to get off track. It can be easy for us to look at the person standing in front of us and judge them.

It's also easy to think things like "well, when I was vulnerable, no one helped me. I had to 'pull myself up by my own bootstraps.' Why shouldn't others need to figure out a way to do the same?"

But what if someone *had* been willing to help us out in our time of need?

I'll share an example with you of how this might look in the world today.

I talked with someone once who worked in a factory.

He would talk about how the young people today were constantly pushing back on management to get things like better sick time and vacation time, more benefits, etc.

This annoyed him tremendously because he never got any of that when he was younger.

He had to deal with the one week of vacation time they got a year, and he had to go to work when he was sick.

Why shouldn't they have to do the same? Why should they get better working conditions than he got? Have these kids gotten soft?

But the thing is, he *should have also gotten those things*. Because everyone deserves to be treated fairly, everyone needs time off to recharge, and employers should be providing those things.

Just because his generation didn't get those things doesn't mean that was right. And it certainly doesn't mean that conditions should never improve for future generations.

Moses is reminding Israel of exactly this.

Just because they experienced being slaves in the desert doesn't mean that was fair or right. And it doesn't mean that others experiencing vulnerability like poverty, or being a foreigner in the land, or being orphaned or widowed deserve to remain in those conditions either.

And it certainly doesn't mean the Israelites should ignore the vulnerable or not help them out.

Jesus says something similar in Matthew 19 as well.

Some people brought their children to Jesus because they wanted Jesus to pray for them.

But, Jesus's disciples acted as though the people were bothering him.

This might sound harsh to our ears today, but in that time period, spending time with children who were not your own seemed wasteful or purposeless.

Children would have been considered a distraction from their ministry.

But, as he often does, Jesus easily flips the cultural narrative.

He says, "People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom." This is important because he's including anyone who might be considered vulnerable.

This would have been very different than the cultural expectation of the time period.

Jesus is essentially saying, "you were vulnerable like these children, and you deserved attention just like they do."

Instead of continuing the social narrative that children (especially those who were not your own) didn't deserve time or attention from adults, Jesus tells the crowd that they do, and that they deserved attention and care when they were children, too.

Jesus is trying to change the narrative. He's shifting the culture in the way that only Jesus can do – by example and without shame or anxiety.

Jesus is reminding the disciples and everyone else who is watching that the most vulnerable people deserve love, compassion, care, and attention, too.

And we are reminded of this 2000 years later, as well.

We are called to protect and care for the vulnerable, even if, when we were vulnerable, we did not receive the care or protection that we deserved.

This is not "an eye for an eye" situation. We are called to do better from generation to generation.

As individuals, as community members, and as nations, we are called to care for one another not only by our individual actions but also through our collective actions.

Jesus reminds us that *everyone* belongs to God's kingdom. Everyone on the list we made earlier belongs to God's kingdom.

And if God's kingdom is right here on Earth, then everyone on this list belongs and deserves love, kindness, compassion, and care.

And this is the Good News that Jesus so often preaches and that we are called to continue living into.

Care for the vulnerable. Love society's "unlovable." Offer compassion to everyone. Know that even when we are most vulnerable, we are still part of God's kingdom and we are worthy of God's love and of the love of our neighbours.

May you leave here today with this encouraging reminder that we are *all* loved and cared for. Amen.

Let us pray: Holy God, sometimes the simplest of your commands are the hardest for us to hear.

You say, "Love your enemy." "Turn the other cheek." "Care for the widow and the orphan."

And we want to know: How? When? Where?

Open up space in us to simply hear your truth for what it is. Open up space in our hearts to dream new dreams, to imagine new realities, to draw closer to you and closer to love.

With hope for a better tomorrow, we listen and we pray. Amen.