

# Taryn Montgomery: Age-In-Place

Sermon by Taryn Montgomery

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## Age-In-Place

[Tell the story of Matthew 22:34-46]

I **love** Jesus in this story! The Pharisees clearly are not getting it – again, and Jesus is there: calmly and assuredly, to explain what seems to be the obvious. It is the very humanistic aspects of Jesus to which we can relate, and it is the divine that empowers us.

Good morning! My name is Taryn Montgomery, and I am here today on behalf of [Christian Communities Group Homes](#) in northeast DC. I am so thankful for being here with you this morning, both for the opportunity to share with you about my organization and the opportunity to understand, alongside of you, the gospel message for today.

First, I would like to tell you a bit about CCGH. A subsidiary program of Episcopal Senior Ministries, CCGH was founded in 1981 in response to the need for affordable housing for many DC seniors. Over the past 25 years, we have served hundreds of low-income seniors through our three group homes in northeast DC, many of whom have been homeless for a while and have little or no family living in the area. CCGH is their home, it is their community – we are family. In 1994, CCGH founded its outreach program, Age-In-Place. Designed to keep seniors in their homes as long as possible and in a safe and familiar environment, Age-In-Place assists seniors by providing home services, such as yard work, painting, cleaning, and general

home repairs – all at no cost to the senior. We do this through the help of committed volunteers, many of them coming from local churches, schools and community service organizations.

And ... after several assessments of the area, it has been determined that we will be expanding our Age-In-Place program to Ward 4 starting January 2006, which is what brings me here to you today. Along with recruiting new seniors to serve, we must also secure donated office space to house our program and connect with local churches, schools, businesses and community groups for volunteer support. For it is through the service of prospective volunteers such as you that serves the needs of our seniors, meeting them in the places they are at.

This brings me to the gospel lesson for today. As I said before, I really enjoy Jesus in this story because he is real and he is expressive. It is almost as though he takes on the role of a parent, explaining – essentially himself as the Messiah, to the Pharisees in a practical and yet indirect way. If I recall moments when my parents tried to explain things to me – things I should have realized or a question I had already asked, the more implicit their reasoning, the more their answer made sense and the more it stuck with me.

I imagine there is a level of frustration on the part of Jesus. Here the Pharisees are attempting to test him ... come on; it is Christ! Well of course, we know this now, but the Pharisees did not know that then ... Moreover, I imagine that I might have been included in that group, an individual that did not quite get it. Honestly, sometimes I think I am still there. I have so much to learn. However, the radical thing about this story is that Jesus remains calm and patient; he willingly meets the Pharisees where they are. He steps into their reality and their misunderstanding. Jesus meets them, shows them grace; just as he did with everyone he encountered.

In the same way that Jesus met those Pharisees, God – working

through the Spirit – meets us today. God comes to us in the midst of our struggles, pain, frustrations, joy, sorrows and happiness. God actively meets us, calling attention to our needs, and serves us in the midst of them. Yet, for many of us, life is not so bad. Things could be much worse, but God still chooses to meet us, each of us, where we are at – expressing grace, peace, love, and understanding.

I believe this is exactly what God calls us to do. To love our neighbors as ourselves, to reach out, to share what we have and who we are, God calls us to meet our neighbors in the midst of their surroundings, oftentimes in the midst of their suffering. This means serving them according to their needs, not what we think is best. It means getting to know them for who they are, not who we want them to be. It means doing for them in the environment they know, not moving them to a place more comfortable for us.

I must admit, I have not been on the job long at CCGH, but I have seen enough to know that our seniors are being met in the places in which they are. Just yesterday, I took a group of college students to the home of Ms. Dawson, an 85 year-old widow living in Ward 5. She has been living in her home for well over 50 years, maintaining it herself for most of those years. However, Ms. Dawson can no longer do the cleaning and upkeep that she once could, so our volunteers spent their Saturday morning vacuuming, dusting, scrubbing floors, and sorting clothes – essentially meeting Ms. Dawson in the midst of her need.

Our seniors are being served – according to what they need, according to whom they are, according to where they are. In the same way that Jesus met those Pharisees, loving his neighbor as himself, may we hear the call to meet our neighbors in the places in which they are. May we Serve, love and give – not with an answer – but with the grace of God working through us.

I invite you to hear the call, to leave willingly your comfort zones, to meet your neighbors where they are. You can do it through Age-In-Place; you can do it through Seekers Church; you can do it in every day interactions on the street, in the office, or at school. We must be aware of the individuals we meet and the stories that lie beyond the face. Meet the Pharisees, meet the seniors, let us meet one another.

Let us pray...

Gracious and Loving God,  
You have met us, you have loved us, you have showed us grace. Empower us to show that same grace to our neighbors, meeting them where they are at and serving accordingly. **Amen.**