

# SERMON NOTES

**PASTOR WILLIAM V. GREEN**

The mission of our church is  
“We use our resources, tangible  
and intangible, to minimize  
human suffering and enhance  
human well-being.  
This is godliness to us.”

## *The Pressure to Be First* *John 5:6-7*

*John 5:6-7 “When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” The sick man said, ‘Sir, I do not have anyone who will help me. I need somebody who will put me into the pool. When the water starts to move, I try to get in. But someone else always gets in before me.’”*

Perspective-taken reminds us:

People’s stories shape their responses.

People’s histories shape their hopes.

People’s experiences shape their expectations.

Practical Steps for Perspective-Taken

**Ask About the Story Behind the Struggle:** *An individual’s present conditions are shaped by past realities. Ask: “What has this person lived through?”*

**Listen Without Defending Your Assumptions:** *Listening is not waiting for your turn to speak. It is suspending your assumptions long enough to hear truth you didn’t expect.*

**Avoid Comparing Their Journey to Yours:** *Comparison kills compassion. Your path is not their path. Your strength is not their strength. Your access is not their access.*

**Let Compassion Interrupt Your Theology:** *Sometimes religious people cling to rules more tightly than they cling to mercy. Allow compassion to correct the parts of us that sound more like religion than Jesus.*

**Choose Grace Over Assumption Every Time:** *Grace sees what judgment cannot. Grace hears what assumptions ignore. Grace understands what perspective reveals.*

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**Sometimes You're Tired of Trying: Because the pressure to be first wears people out.**

**Maybe There Is Loneliness You Don't Talk About: Because pressure isolates people—even in crowds.**

**My Story Is Too Heavy for a Simple Answer: Because pressure makes people feel they must justify why they aren't "ahead."**

**Tell Me How to Be Healed When I Don't Know Where to Start: Because pressure convinces people that if they don't start perfectly, they shouldn't start at all.**

**At Times I Feel Stuck but Everyone Else Is Moving: Because pressure makes comparison feel like condemnation.**