# SERMON RECAP
## OCTOBER 25 2026

**Series:** BECOMING
**Sermon:** Becoming a community of courage and care
**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Paul wrote to a young church in Thessalonica that was under pressure. Now critics were telling the church he was a fraud: false information, wrong motives, just trying to please people, throwing his weight around. Paul answers each charge, and in his answers we hear what a faithful community looks like. The accusations against him were serious and friends I have to tell you, they feel familiar.

**False information, in other words: "You're a fake pastor."** This one feels like the most timely. He was accused of bringing not "good news," but "fake news." The opposition he faced was calling him a "fake apostle," and I feel that. I've been called a fake pastor many times. When I hear, "You're a fake pastor!" I wonder why? Because I love people? Because I include everyone? Because I think that God's grace is for all? It's because I actually read the Bible, not just focus on a few verses.

Friends, everything we say and do is bound by the scriptures, but we don't pull a few verses out of context to weaponize our preconceived notions. The weight and the story of the full book, the full message, is so much heavier than those puny verses that people like to throw around and wield like hammers.

The weight of God's love is bound in this book. The weight of God's message of salvation and liberation and generosity is wrapped up in this incredible book. It is an incredible work of art that is worth exploring and digging into and examining and arguing with and wrestling with. But everything we do from our mission and vision is bound deeply. It's rooted deeply in the scriptures.

So when people say I'm a fake pastor or that I don't read the Bible, it's hard not to scoff. Friends, you are part of a Bible-believing church. Amen. Now, that doesn't mean the same thing to everyone, but I know with all my heart that this is a Bible-believing church — the depth and the beauty and the weight of the Bible.

**False Motives, in other words "you're trying to build a mega church with a big budget and big salary."** This one comes more from the secular world, from people who mistrust religion in general. I've heard many atheists say, "Well, if you need God, fear of God's punishment to cause you to do good, what kind of motivation is that?" And I said, "You've never heard me preach." Because fear is not my motivation. Fear is not the motivation that drives this church. When you talk about the motive of why we do what we do, the motive of what we do is out of joy. My evangelism is not driven out of fear or trying to save people. It's saying I have found something wonderful and I think it would be wonderful for you too.




**People pleasing, other words: "you're trying to be popular."** This is tricky considering we have two trophies in the back of the sanctuary that we've been given in the last six months. But trophies and recognition are not what we are seeking. And also I want to point out who gave out the awards. When a 50-year-old organization that's been dedicated to social justice says you're doing a good job, I'll say thank you very much and we'll keep going. Because there are other ways that we could be gaining popularity and status, but we're choosing compassion — compassion and justice instead.

When we talk about people-pleasing, there is a people-pleasing kind of Christianity these days that seeks power and recognition, and that often gets draped in the flag and gets put on TV commercials, and by another name is Christian nationalism. A kind of Christianity that seeks power and influence and control over society. That's the kind of people-pleasing, power-seeking Christianity that we stand against.

**Throwing your weight around, in other words "you think you're important and want to exert control over others."** Here's the thing. There's a time and place to throw your weight around, because I have something called privilege in this world. When I put on this robe, when I put on my collar, when I enter this body that is white, male, and 49 years old, I have a lot of weight that I can throw around.

And so the important part is to throw it around in the right places, to throw it around for people that don't have as much weight in this world. I've been given a lot of weight that I don't necessarily deserve. Some that I have earned. I've earned my education. I've earned a lot in my life, but I recognize that it's not all mine either, and that I have a responsibility to use this weight that I have for good.

Like Paul's community, there is opposition. But I came here to tell you: Keep becoming. And I thank God for you constantly. I thank God for you every day, because I know what you and what we are becoming in Christ.

**NEXT WEEK:** **New Series: Becoming, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**