

# Lenten Devotional 6

By: Kelly Fuhrmann

First Congregational UCC, Jefferson, Ohio

Meditation Passages: [Esther 4:12-14](#), [Matthew 22:36-40](#)

If... then...

Two simple words which dictate a cause and effect relationship. If I do or do not do this, then this will or will not happen. In Esther's story, her cousin Mordecai was being warned that if she didn't speak up to the king, her people would perish. Though we are not in a position of royal power, we still have the power and responsibility to speak up against the injustices around us. The opiate crisis is a painful injustice affecting many of our neighbors whether they live under our roof, down the street, or across the nation.

If... then...

Desmond Tutu is quoted saying, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."<sup>1</sup> If we refuse to take a stand against this crisis, then we are not doing our best to love our neighbor. This crisis is like the elephant, crushing the mind and body of those who suffer in its grip. We must say that enough is enough. We must say that, as a community, something must be done to stop this. We will not continue to let our people perish.

If... then...

If we say we love our neighbor, then we must love every neighbor. Not just the ones who have lives that look like ours. Not just the ones who appear to have it all together. We must love our suffering neighbors too. Not just the ones suffering from situations which we can understand, but also those who are at war with themselves in the midst of addiction. We must give them hope. Give them the power to love themselves and know that others love them as well. We are members in our community for a moment like this. The moment to stand up and say enough is enough is now.

*Ever-present God, even when you seem to be at an arm's length in the struggles of our neighbor, remind us all that your hand is always moving and guiding us. Stir in us a spirit of care and compassion for all neighbors, not just the ones like us. Amen.*

<sup>1</sup>Brown, R. M. (1984). *Unexpected news: Reading the Bible with Third World eyes*. Westminster Press.