

Thought For The Week

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A Cup of Warmth in a Cold Cup World

The sermon, delivered by Tom and titled "A Cup of Warmth in a Cold Cup World," opens with a light-hearted admission that the title was inspired by Grok, an AI tool he uses for sermon preparation, much like another individual named Scott. Tom humorously notes how relying on Grok can sometimes make his preaching sound overly formal, but he proceeds to invite the congregation to reflect on the world's spiritual chill amid God's warming presence.

Tom begins by painting a vivid picture of the world's coldness, not merely in physical temperature but in human spirit, where indifference and isolation dominate. He echoes a sentiment from Scott about living in a cold world, exemplified by extreme divisions: disagreeing with someone could lead to violence, with some mourning while others celebrate. This coldness manifests in everyday interactions—averted eyes, unspoken kind words, and missed connections. He quotes Matthew 24:12: "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold," attributing this to sin's chilling effect on culture. Examples include scrolling past a friend's pain on social media, ignoring a neighbor's wave, or withholding encouragement. Tom shares personal observations: at work, coworkers won't wave or say hi; on walks, people ignore greetings, fostering a sense of distance.

Expanding on this, Tom references 2 Timothy 3:1-5, which foretells perilous times in the last days when people become lovers of themselves, money, boastful, proud, blasphemous, disobedient, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, and lovers of pleasure rather than God. These traits, he argues, have a form of godliness but deny its power, mirroring today's hurried, self-focused society. He suggests this could indicate the end times, with widespread hatred of God, lack of self-control, and brutality.

Despite this bleakness, Tom pivots to hope through Jesus. He returns to the second scripture reading, Matthew 10:42: "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." In Jesus' era, cold water refreshed in desert heat; today, the world craves warmth—a smile, kind word, or moment of care. Tom laments how even simple greetings are rare, yet these small acts in Christ's name hold eternal significance. The sermon explores three key themes: why the world grows colder, how small acts of warmth rival grand gestures, and their eternal ripples.

Delving deeper into the world's coldness, Tom cites James 2:15-16: If a brother or sister lacks clothes and food, and you say "Go in peace, keep warm and well fed" without helping, what good is it? He criticizes empty gestures like saying "I'll pray for you" without follow-up actions such as a call, coffee, or real connection. Praying isn't wrong, but often it's a hollow response without genuine care or effort. He questions how often people say this without even praying or truly helping. Ecclesiastes 4:11 poses: "If two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?" Solomon recognized isolation's chill, and Tom applies this to modern life. Despite digital connectivity—phones, Facebook, constant calls—loneliness epidemics affect over half of adults, as

studies show. Human contact differs from virtual; meeting up, calling, or kind words are lacking. Sin's "frost" creeps in via pride (skipping greetings), envy (withholding praise), and apathy (shrugging off care), freezing people out and forgetting compassion. But God sees the overlooked and calls believers to bring His love's warmth.

Tom emphasizes God's cherish for the small, quoting the first reading, Zechariah 4:10: "For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth." When Israel rebuilt the temple, efforts seemed insignificant, but God rejoiced. Similarly, a quick "You're doing great" to a coworker, a wave to a neighbor, or a hug to a friend is monumental to God. Luke 16:10 reinforces: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much." A kind word is a sacred trust, stewarding God's grace to build His kingdom incrementally.

The parable in Matthew 13:31-32 compares the kingdom to a mustard seed—small but growing into a mighty tree. A greeting might plant a seed in a broken heart, encouragement take root in confidence, a hug offer shade to the weary. Tom shares the story of Sarah, a Christian facing job loss and grief, feeling invisible. A greeter's hug and whisper—"God sees you"—rekindled her hope and faith. He relates personally: weary days lifted by congregational kind words or hugs. He praises the congregation's welcoming spirit—many uplift, greet visitors, and spread love. Carol exemplifies this by hugging and hello-ing everyone; though Tom admits he's not as good at it, such acts make the church shine and turn days around.

To counter the cold, Tom calls for "cups of warmth" through the Spirit's power. Ephesians 4:29-32 instructs: No unwholesome talk, only what's helpful for building up; be kind, compassionate, forgiving. This blueprint replaces criticism with encouragement, silence with greetings, distance with embraces. Galatians 5:22-23 lists kindness among the Spirit's fruits—love, joy, peace, etc.—flowing naturally from walking with Christ. A warm "Good to see you" to a cashier or compliment to a doubting teen reflects God's love; it takes little to build someone up. Proverbs 3:3-4 urges: "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck."

Not everyone preaches like Peter or Paul, but all can offer kindness. Romans 12:4-5 states: Many members in one body, with different functions, united in Christ. Verses 6-8 add: Use gifts—if serving, serve; if encouraging, encourage; if showing mercy, do it cheerfully. No need for "large" roles; encourage if that's your gift. Every hug, smile, or word strengthens Christ's body, keeping it vibrant. Even preachers and elders need encouragement, hugs, or check-ins—everyone plays a part, and small things build the church.

These acts aren't fleeting but echo eternally. Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Greeting the lonely greets Jesus; hugging the broken embraces the Savior. This is worship, multiplying like wildfire. 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing." One kind word sparks another; a church hug inspires external outreach.

Tom illustrates with Mark, on despair's brink with piling bills. A stranger's coffee shop prayer offer led to conversation, church invite, and salvation—one warmth creating eternal ripples. Seeing someone down, asking "How are you?" or "What's wrong?" plants seeds that grow into salvation.

The world remains cold, frozen by sin, but believers carry Christ's warmth—the living water of John 4:14, a spring welling to eternal life. Greetings, hugs, and encouragements refresh a thirsty

world. Tom challenges: This week, say hello to someone new, hug the hurting, offer a genuine compliment. Don't underestimate small things—they're God's big things.

If feeling cold, come to Jesus' love, the warmest cup. For non-Christians, warm baptismal waters await; the congregation offers prayers. Tom closes by inviting forward those needing baptism or support.

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In the sermon "A Cup of Warmth in a Cold Cup World," Tom contrasts the world's spiritual coldness—marked by indifference, isolation, and sin—with the warming power of small acts of kindness in Christ's name. Drawing from Matthew 24:12, he notes how wickedness causes love to grow cold, evident in averted eyes, ignored greetings, and self-focused interactions. He cites 2 Timothy 3:1-5 to describe modern society as unloving, brutal, and pleasure-seeking, possibly signaling the end times. Personal anecdotes illustrate this: coworkers who won't wave, strangers who ignore hellos, and digital connections that fail to combat loneliness.

Yet, hope shines through Matthew 10:42, where Jesus promises rewards for giving even a cup of cold water to disciples. In today's "desert" of emotional dryness, Tom urges "cups of warmth"—smiles, kind words, hugs—that carry eternal weight. He references James 2:15-16 to critique empty prayers without action, and Ecclesiastes 4:11 to highlight isolation's chill. God values the small, as in Zechariah 4:10, where humble efforts rejoice the Lord, and Luke 16:10, where faithfulness in little leads to much. The mustard seed parable (Matthew 13:31-32) shows how tiny acts grow into mighty impacts.

Tom shares stories: Sarah, revived by a greeter's hug, and his own uplift from congregational encouragement. He praises members like Carol for spreading love. Ephesians 4:29-32 and Galatians 5:22-23 guide believers to build others up with kindness as a fruit of the Spirit. Romans 12:4-8 emphasizes using diverse gifts, even encouragement or mercy, to strengthen the church body.

These acts echo eternally, per Matthew 25:40, as service to the "least" is service to Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 calls for mutual edification, sparking ripples like Mark's salvation from a stranger's prayer. Tom concludes by invoking John 4:14's living water, challenging listeners to commit to small warmths this week. He invites non-Christians to baptism and offers congregational prayers, reminding that Jesus' love is the ultimate warmth.

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