Good Morning to all of you and to our special guests this morning. We have set today aside to honor the First Responders in our nearby communities. They are often the unsung heroes who sacrifice and often risk their lives to protect us and to come to our aid. - Petra 25 people!

I am honored to stand here this morning and to address these men and women who serve us. I have a special appreciation in my heart for these first responders. Last year during the service when we honored first responders I was in the hospital recovering from a heart attack. I was looking forward to standing here and honoring them but that Saturday afternoon I ended up flat on my back on our patio while Erma called 911. In short order the Ambulance, EMT’s and Paramedics arrived. I was in a lot of pain and it was extra comforting to see two of our own kneeling beside me. Jess Kiefski and Karin Stoltzfus.

I was in a daze through it all but I knew I was in good hands and at a time like that it means a whole lot.

I also serve as one of the police chaplains of the New Holland Police Department and do police ride a-longs at times and help with death notifications. It gives me a bit of the behind the scenes perspective into the life and challenges of these officers. They are under tremendous pressure as a spirit of lawlessness and disrespect increases in our society.

Pastor Titus Kauffman serves as fire chaplain to our community fire company and one thing we have both come to recognize is that not only do the men and women on the front lines sacrifice but also their spouses and families sacrifice a lot.

Today we honor them as well. Few people know the emotional weight they carry knowing their loved one may be putting their life in danger everyday they go to work or respond to a call. We pray for you as well today.

So today we honor those who serve us and in many ways put their lives on the line for us. We honor the police, sheriffs, constables, National Guard and security people. We honor the EMT’s, Paramedics, and EMS responders. We honor the fire men and women, fire police and all those who serve in our local fire companies.

• We also remember Paramedic and Fireman Harold Conner Jr. and his family. Harold died this week.

We thank you and we honor you today. If you serve as one of these First Responders or are a family member please stand at this time and allow us to recognize and show honor to you.

Thank you for coming this morning. We continue to pray for you and support you. We also thank those who have served as First Responders in the past.
We have several tables set up in the lobby this morning. I invite the First Responders to stop by the table and pick up some gift certificates and free tickets to a Reading Phillies ball game on July 19 which is designated as First Responder and Families Appreciation Day at the ball park.

These tickets are given through Thunder Outreach Ministry who we have partnered with today for this First Responder Sunday. They have been a real blessing and help in putting this together.

- They are also doing this at a number of other churches.
- A special thanks to their leader Mark Malizzi. Visit their table in the lobby.

There are also tables in the lobby with some give away things for children from the fire company and from Alert All thanks to Jon Boyd. – Firemen hats

After the service, parents and children are invited to visit the First Responder vehicles in the upper parking area. We also plan to have the lifeline helicopter from Thomas Jefferson University Hospital arrive if things go as planned. You will be able to visit that as well.

First Service – There are café coupons for First Responders and their families to enjoy our café this morning. (Closes at 11:00 – stay for pizza after second service.)

Second Service – There will be a pizza lunch under the tent in the parking area after the service for First Responders and their families.

This morning I am reminded of the story in Luke 10:25-28

This is a story of a First Responder known as the Good Samaritan. This man from Samaria was the first person to care enough to respond to a man in need of assistance. His donkey became his rescue vehicle without the sirens and flashing lights.

READ Luke 10: 25-28

Here are some take away lessons from this story that connect with us today.

1. First Responders help without prejudice.

Whether the person in need caused their own crises because of alcohol, stupidity or was an innocent victim they respond without prejudice. Reminds me of the teenager First Responders had to rescue. He was stuck in his chimney while attempting to get past his parent’s curfew. - PICTURE

In this story that Jesus told, the Smaritan was a person considered inferior and part of the low class of the society. While the priest and Levite were of the respectable upper class. Yet he was the one truly without prejudice in helping the man in the ditch.

Jesus teaches us to treat everyone like a neighbor with human dignity.

2. First Responders are willing to put their lives at risk to help others.
This man in the ditch had just been the victim of a brutal robbery. The dangerous thieves may still have been around waiting for another victim. The safest thing to do would have been to hightail it out of there on his donkey as fast as that beast would go.

But instead he was willing to stop and help at great risk to himself. I am aware of some of the dangerous situations police, fire and other responder put themselves into in order to help others.

Whether it is rescuing people from a burning building or arresting someone who may be armed First Responders are continually facing risky situations.

Several years ago one of our elders, Titus Kulp, fell into an abandoned deep well and had to be roped out by our local firemen. (PICTURE) I was there and it was a dangerous situation but no one was arguing that they didn’t want to go down into that well. They were willing to take the risk without much thought to themselves.

3. First Responders are willing to be pay the price and be inconvenienced.

The Good Samaritan probably had places to go and things to do. It was a major inconvenience to stop and help. It cost him both time and money to help.

So it is with First Responders. Many serve as volunteers and have to respond quickly at all times of night and day. It costs them sleep, family time, work time, and major inconveniences at times. Many First Responders do not get paid. They willingly sacrifice. We are indebted to them.

I also want to say thank you to businesses that allow their workers to respond to fire and other emergencies. They also help pay the price in keeping our communities safe.

4. First Responders demonstrate what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus said the greatest of all the commandments is to love God and love our neighbor as our self.

We don’t get to heaven by our good works but the bible says faith without works is dead.

Our salvation comes through putting our faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We are not saved by our good works but we are saved for good works.

Jesus gave his life for us. He is the ultimate First Responder in coming to earth to rescue us. He came without prejudice. He gave his life to save us. He paid the ultimate price.

To help us appreciate the life of a first responder I have asked a few First Responders to share a brief testimony. Jess and Gary please come forward…..

First is Jess Kiefski. Jess is a Paramedic with the Medic Unit response vehicle. She works with Coatesville and northwestern Chester County area employed by Brandywine Hospital, and part time in New Holland/Ephrata/Leola area employed by Ephrata Hospital. On more serious calls the medic unit responds with the ambulance. The medic unit is equipped with advanced level equipment.
Second is Gary Sensenig. For 9 years Gary volunteered as an EMT at the New Holland Ambulance. As of now he hold 2 jobs, one as a paramedic at Ephrata Wellspan Hospital and one as a police officer in East Earl Township Police Department.

Third is James Ulrich who serves on the Ambulance and fire crew with New Holland and Farmersville.

Fourth is Mike Kings who was in a bad vehicle accident several years ago and was rescued by some of our local EMT’s.

Conclusion:

Whether you are a First Responder or not we are all called to live in such a way where we care for those around us. We are all called to be inconvenienced at times and to put ourselves out for others.

We are all called to not be prejudiced in how we treat people. We are all called to love our neighbor as ourselves.

To the First Responders, we again say thank you for keeping us safe, for showing compassion and for being our Good Samaritan when you show up in the police car, ambulance, rescue vehicle, and fire truck.

We are grateful and we honor you.

I have asked Mark Malizzi from Thunder Outreach to give the closing prayer for our First Responders.

PRAYER