

I know it seems hard to believe but there are actually three Golden Girls episodes that I absolutely cannot stand watching. The first is from season one where they think Sophia is having a heart attack and there is just too much conversation around death. The second is from season two which served as a backdoor spinoff to Empty Nest and all it is is characters you just do not care about and who never end up on Empty Nest anyway. And the third is *a very special episode* from season four entitled “Brother, Can You Spare a Jacket.”

Blanche comes home from a shopping spree showing off her new brown, leather aviator jacket. At the same time, she tells the girls she stopped and picked up their lottery tickets for the week. They begin scratching away and Dorothy asks what you get if you have three palm trees? Sophia says there is no way she has three palm trees because that means she has won \$10,000. Well, logically, the best place to keep a winning lottery ticket is in the pocket of Blanche’s new coat until they can go cash it in. But of course there is always a catch right? Sophia isn’t there when they decide to put the ticket there so when her priest shows up to pick up their donations for a local charity, she gives him the beat up looking jacket, with the ticket inside.

Chaos ensues. They can't find the jacket, Sophia confesses. There is an article in the paper about a rock star who is auctioning off a jacket he found at a local thrift store and wore at a concert. They realize it's their jacket, they go to the auction, and lose it to a local politician who then donates the jacket to a homeless shelter as evidence that he cares about people in need. So naturally...the girls go to the shelter to track this jacket down, and they get mistaken as guests for the evening, and this is where the episode turns saccharine. Sophia ends up running into an old friend who ran out of money to pay for her room at a retirement community and is now living on the street. Rose meets a man from Minnesota who lost his job as a hotel porter and because of his age is having trouble finding another job. Blanche gets into a conversation with a young man who says he is a sociologist undercover doing research about homelessness, only to have him eventually confess that he was an alcoholic who dropped out of his PhD program because it was too much.

When the lights go out, the girls split up to find the jacket and by morning...they have it, with the lottery ticket still in the pocket. They look around the space, at people who look like them, at little kids and families, and the dulcet tones of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," start playing. The door opens, the lights go on, and it's morning. They walk out and run into

one of the people who run the shelter and an unspoken conversation passes between the four of them. Sophia takes the lottery ticket out of the jacket and hands it to the man and they leave, message received, fade to black. It's not a bad episode per se, it's just really heavy handed in its messaging, but honestly...sometimes we need the heavy hand...something Paul knew as he was writing to the Galatians.

On the whole, Galatians never fails to make me chuckle a bit because Paul is just at his wits end with these people, and you can tell it right from the jump of the letter. Traditionally, in ancient letter writing, there was a pattern. You opened the letter, you said some greetings, you laid out your thesis for writing, and then you went through a period of thanksgivings before getting into the meat of the message. Galatians is Paul's only letter *without* a thanksgiving. For the community hearing this for the first time, they would have known immediately that they were in trouble. In the wide world of words, Paul has *zero* words of thanks for them, yikes. At some point, Paul makes a comment about people castrating themselves, it's all very colorful and weird. This is also why I find it amusing that Luther loved Galatians so much, leave it to Dr. Martin to like Paul's angstiest letter best.

But what's going on? Well...a lot of things. The first of which is that rogue preachers are coming in and telling people new to the faith that they

need to become Jewish first, if you catch my drift, before they can fully and officially follow Jesus. They are sowing seeds of dissent in an already fragile community and it is just making everything awful. The community is starting to fracture, there is in-fighting and struggle and that's not even taking into consideration the fact that they're trying to do this new thing in the midst of a culture that is diametrically opposed to it. The Roman Empire isn't exactly banging the drum welcoming these new Jesus loving communities and so when the fractures are happening within the community, the pressure from the outside is going to exert itself even more. He knows they're tired, they're feeling the weight of the work and calling that they are striving towards, they're fighting, they're stressed, and the world is getting to be too much. So what are they supposed to do? Paul tries to answer that as best as he can, even when he is extremely vexed.

In the midst of a community on the brink...Paul brings this message, "Bear one another's burdens...let us not grow weary in doing what is right." He knows the world is hard, I mean the man has been arrested and shipwrecked more times than he can probably count. He has been harassed, kicked out of cities, locked in the stocks, he knows the weight of living a life of faith, of being counter-cultural in the midst of an Empire that is trying to control everything, and yet...his message remains the same...the only way

they can do this is together...the only way the message of Christ can be shared is by not giving up, by continuing to fight the good fight, by showing up for and with one another, and it's not easy, but it will be slightly easier if they maintain their communal ties and not like infighting break things apart. It's a hard message to hear, because frankly most of the time it's much easier to just take your ball and go home, do your own thing, let other people worry about their own burdens...but rarely is what is easy and what is Christlike the same thing...and Paul is always going to err on the side of Christ.

I'll be honest in the world we live in, the path of the Galatians *sounds* like the better path. It's easier, it's calmer; go with what is going to make things smooth and simple, stop worrying about anyone else but your own corner of the world, let things work themselves out on their own. On my most introverted, heart weary days, I want to say, yeah sign me up for that, but...and I say this having fully acknowledged last week that Paul is not my most favorite dude...then I let Paul's words his me square in the chest, "let us not grow weary in doing what is right." And y'all so many of our siblings need us to help bear their burdens in the name of what is right, what is Christlike, what is love centered.

We are now living in a world where too many of our siblings are wondering how their kids are going to have lunch at school when it starts

back up in August. Too many of our siblings are wondering how they are going to function safely without Medicaide, families with kids who have different abilities that mean lots of medical bills that they will not be able to pay. Too many of our siblings are wondering how they are going to be able to live safely in this country if they are trans, because everywhere they turn the world seems determined to make things less safe. Too many of our siblings are wondering if they're going to end up in a detention center in their own country. Too many of our siblings are flat out wondering if they live in a place where their life is valued or if they are just a number that can be erased or forgotten because they aren't wealthy or straight or cis-gendered or white. We have to keep showing up because our siblings need us, they need to know that they do not shoulder the burdens of their hearts alone. They need to know that they are seen and valued, because far too often the world is telling them that they aren't.

And I know...it's exhausting. There's a reason Jesus made a point to go off and pray on his own. There's a reason Jesus sent the seventy out in pairs. He knew that the world was too hard, too scary, too wearying to tackle alone and with a heavy heart. We cannot do this work alone and we cannot stop doing the work, it's too necessary and frankly it's the work Jesus called us to—feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, giving a voice to

the voiceless, finding the forgotten and the lost, loving our neighbor as ourselves, clothing the naked, healing the sick. We are living in a world that needs a message of hope, a message of the gospel more than ever, and if we try to do that alone, we're going to fail, we're going to drown in the weight of the need, but if we commit to doing it together? If we commit to going out two by two, together as a community? If we commit to sharing one another's burdens and sharing the burdens of our siblings? The work will be lighter, there will be more opportunities to see the light in the midst of the darkness, and we will know that we aren't doing this alone.

Sometimes we need the heavy handed message, and sometimes the gospel is just that. Sometimes we need the reminder that being one in the body of Christ means sharing one another's burdens and doing whatever we can to ease them. Sometimes we need the reminder that yeah the work is hard and it is exhausting and it is going to wear us down, but we must not grow weary of doing what is right. In a world where it is easier to crack under the pressure, split apart, and go to our separate corners, we choose to walk together, we choose to see each other, we choose to value one another. In a world that would rather we stopped striving for Jesus, gave up and took the jacket for ourselves, may we dare to ask, brother can you spare a jacket? And make sure they check the pockets. **AMEN!!!**