

Mosaic – The Christian Life – Week 5 – Community

Room for Community – Pr Jim Sprengle, August 29, 2021

- I. **Acts 2:44** – ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common.
- II. **Friendship and community**... what do they mean to you?
 - a. It's difficult to put in perspective the vast changes that occurred in the past 30 years or so.
 - b. Just think, back in the 1980's we had no email, and we needed a dial up phone to call someone – and the cost of long distance was expensive!
 - c. If you wanted to maintain a friendship in those days, it took some effort.
 - i. Handwritten letters, long distance phone calls, personal visits
 - d. Today, the word, "friend" can have a much different meaning.
 - i. I read an article that addressed this issue... It starts out,
 - ii. "Are your friends on Facebook actually your friends?" According to an appeals court in Florida, '[l]egally, Facebook friends aren't necessarily your friends.' The court dove into this question because of a judge who may have been required to recuse herself from a case—because an attorney involved in that case was friends with the judge on Facebook.
 - iii. However, the court ruled that a recusal was not necessary, as 'Facebook [attempts to get people to accept] friend requests from people they hardly know or who they are only acquainted with in professional circles.'
 - iv. This issue isn't quite finished yet, though, as a Palm Beach appeals court ruled differently on the 'friend' definition—meaning 'the question over the true meaning of social media friendship could eventually be decided by the Florida Supreme Court.'" (Associated Press)
 - e. In today's world, a person who is completely separate in almost every way (except maybe their Facebook posts) are considered a friend.
 - i. The sad thing about some words is they get watered down until they lose meaning... a friend should mean something.
 - ii. Community should mean something.
 - iii. Life together should mean something.
 - f. I don't want to minimize the blessings of technology and how we can stay in touch with people –
 - i. Our family uses Facebook Portal to connect our living rooms with a camera – and I get to see my grandchildren growing up
 - ii. We have instant connection with people by texting or email at any time or place – along with Zoom meetings that help during Covid
 - iii. We can stay connected, but it cannot replace being together.
- III. **Jesus and the disciples** spent 3 years together through good and bad.

- a. Some of you have gone on a mission trip, and as I've said many times, relationships develop very quickly under that kind of pressure.
- b. I read somewhere that it takes 50-60 hours to develop a friendship... and something like 200 hours to make a close friend –
 - i. With a mission trip, we stay together through everything 24/7.
- c. Take that pressure and connection over 3 years... that's close.
- d. The Apostles knew what community and friendship meant because Jesus showed them in person.
- e. So, the Book of Acts begins with Jesus ascending to heaven, and now the Apostles are left to carry on the community of believers.
 - i. After the Holy Spirit came upon the people gathered for the Feast of Pentecost, St. Peter preached to the people.
 - ii. 3000 people came to believe and were baptized, and then it says that they spent time together in community.
 - iii. They ate and communed, they learned and shared... "they had all things in common," (Acts 2:44).
- f. The model that Jesus developed in fellowship and connecting with people became the example for the Church to follow.
- g. The Church (capital C) is the entire group of people who have faith in Jesus
 - i. You see, faith and love connect us
 - ii. – unless of course sin gets in the way

IV. **In the beginning, perfect relationships were possible.**

- a. Adam and Eve were in perfect relationship with God and each other.
- b. The problem came when Eve, who was tempted by satan, rebelled against that perfect connection.
 - i. I don't claim to know exactly what was going on in Adam and Eve's heads that day, but when they ate of the fruit that God commanded them not to eat – their relationship with God and each other changed.
 - ii. Since that moment, all humanity has struggled to stay connected to each other and to God.
- c. Each and every one of us can sit here today and review our past relationships...
 - i. How many times have we hurt others... have we been hurt?
 - ii. How many times has our trust been broken?
 - iii. Which friendships, relationships, and connections ended in sorrow, or bitterness, or pain?
- d. If you are like any normal person, even Christians, the list is long.
 - i. We can take credit for our own sin and mistakes, and we can see the times that others have caused us pain and suffering too.
- e. What about our connection and community with God?
 - i. How many times have we walked away from His will for our lives?
 - ii. How many times have we broken His trust?

- iii. How many times have we acted as if He is nothing to us? Certainly not a close friend or connection we can always count on...?

V. **Broken relationship is a part of sin, but Jesus is the cure.**

- a. No better example exists than Jesus as the great reconciler and builder of community in spite of sin.
 - i. Just consider Zacchaeus, a person who had taken advantage of countless relationships through fraud and theft...
 - 1. Jesus called him into community and the change was immediate – Zacchaeus would restore and reconcile all that he had broken...
 - ii. We are the ones up in the tree, called to restore and reconcile.
 - iii. We are the ones Jesus wants to spend time with in community.
- b. If you can imagine the most terrible, broken relationship ever... that is our relationship to God...
 - i. But Jesus came to mend it... to heal it...
 - ii. His own friends abandoned Him as He was arrested, beaten without mercy, and nailed to a cross in shame.
 - iii. He was even forsaken by the Father (Mark 15:34)
 - iv. Through His sacrifice, a new way was opened for relationship and community – with God... and with each other.
- c. Now that Jesus paid for our sins, we can boldly enter the presence of God... (Hebrews 4:16)
- d. Our relationship to God is restored by the power of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice – and that love flows from our faith into each other.

VI. **The basis for the community of believers is love.**

- a. Not a wishy-washy or romantic love – but a sacrificial and enduring love that binds us together... regardless of our failures and sin
 - i. As 1 Peter 4:8 says, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”
- b. When we make room for community – when we expend the energy in worship, service and mission together – God is able to bring about a beautiful picture.
 - i. This picture is the mosaic we have talked about this past several weeks... many broken pieces tied together by faith in Christ and love.
- c. Without our connection and community, how can we possibly reach into the world around us?
 - i. How can we show others who don't know Jesus what true friendship and love look like?
- d. It all comes together today – we have one service, one community, one Lord, one Baptism, and one faith – which makes one mosaic for God.
- e. Although relationships are never easy, the best things in life never are.

- f. Take time to make room for community, grow your relationship with God and others, and join the mosaic as we make up a beautiful picture of connection, and faith, and love. Amen.