

“Love one another – looking at sin!”

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1 John 4:7-21

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Introduction

Our mission statement as a church is that we seek to be ...

*a loving nurturing Christ-centred community
reaching upward to God in worship and prayer and
outward to the world in mission and service.*

A loving nurturing Christ-centred community ...

The question I have been sitting before God with is, ...

How do we push deeper into that?

How does Christ Church, how does this evening congregation grow to be more of a loving nurturing Christ-centred community?

This is the third sermon in this series in which Andrew and I are looking at community and wanting to explore this command that Jesus gave his disciples to love one another.

So we move from the Gospel of John (chapters 13 and 14) to the first letter of John which is our text for this evening as we go further.

READINGS: 1 John 4:7-21

Now I want to share with you that I sat with this passage all week. I spent quite a few hours crafting my sermon for this evening. I was up early this morning to put in some more time in the quiet and stillness of the morning. I had been at it for hour when at 6am it dawned me I was on the wrong track.

I sat in my study and I prayed again Lord what do you want me to say to the 7pm congregation tonight about community and loving each other?

It is not that I hadn't prayed that prayer earlier. But in that moment I sensed the Lord say to me keep it simple, make it practical. And my mind was taken to a talk I gave a few months ago at an All Age Service where I spoke about the five words of relating. That is what I want to share with you tonight.

The five words of relating are these:-

Hello

Thank you

I'm sorry

I love you

Goodbye

(1) "Hello"

It is good to greet people, to acknowledge them especially when you live with them and see them every day. It could of course be "Good morning" or "Molo" or "More". The point is we need to start conversations, by checking in.

"Sa-bona", the Zulu greeting equivalent of "hello" literally means "I see you". That is so important.

Hello. I see you. Yes I see you too. This next moment, however short or long it may be, we are spending together.

I acknowledge that you have entered my space. I have entered your space. We are here in the same place at the same time and we share this moment.

Hello. I see you.

Now think of how this works out amongst the people with whom you live...

Of where you work ...

Of where you shop ...

Of where you park your car ...

Of coming here for worship ... or meeting in your small group or Connect Group.

It is really important to say hello. I see you. I acknowledge and recognise that you and I share this moment.

(2) "Thank you"

One of the first words we teach a child is the word "Ta!" – thank you.

Time and again Paul begins his letters with thanks ...

Romans 1:8

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you,

Philippians 1:3

I thank my God every time I remember you.

2 Tim 1:3

I thank God ... as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

A key mark of loving one another is that live gratefully. In fact Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 5:16ff)

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire;

A mark of the Spirit burning in us is that we live gratefully. We walk into that attitude by expressing thanks. To live gratefully and thankfully receiving each person who comes across our path with thanks.

Thanks for opening the door,	thanks for coming,
thanks for your support,	thanks for the cup of tea,
thanks for letting me into the traffic,	thank you for the compliment and
appreciation you expressed,	thank you for the gift,
the card,	the meal,
the lift,	the favour,
the help you gave,	

In Xhosa it is interesting that Enkosi (thank you) is so close to Inkosi (God).

(3) “I’m sorry”

It is interesting that in this letter – 1 John – which is all about community and loving one another, and displaying the love of God - the issue that John sees as being the greatest threat to this is the denial of sin.

1 John 1:8

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us

1 John 1:10

If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

We have to deal with the reality of sin. The hard facts are that all the people who are going to make up this loving nurturing Christ centred community are all sinners – every single last one of us.

And sin in essence is not about breaking rules, but about breaking relationships.

In every relationship sooner or later we are bound to offend, hurt, disappoint or aggrieve. This happens all too often in a close family and in working relationships.

We forget,
we express something in the wrong way,
we are not as sensitive as we should have been,
we betray trust,
we act selfishly and make presumptions.

If we are going to grow as a loving nurturing Christ centred community we have got to deal with the reality of sin, which breaks relationships. It breaks our relationships with one another. It breaks our relationship with God.

We can be tempted to deny it.
That is clearly what was happening in the churches that John was writing to.
We are not really sinners. That is not really sin.

The apostle John will have nothing of that.
Deny sin. You deny any need of forgiveness. You deny love.
You deny relationship. You remain alone, isolated, out of community.

Now when John and Paul say we are sinners, it is not a condemning label; it is not an accusation. It is a diagnosis. It is an insight into our condition, so that we know what is wrong and more importantly what to do about it.

The only real honest biblical way to deal with sin is by forgiveness.

1 John 1:8ff

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Every relationship needs a place for saying sorry.

It is central to our relationship with God.

It is essential in our relationships with one another.

Graham Greathead's story -

(4) "I love you"

I spoke two weeks ago about Jesus' washing his disciples' feet and giving the instruction that we should do the same. Love is an action.

But it is also something said. Maybe we don't use those exact words – they not be appropriate, but words expressing affection and admiration, words of appreciation and concern, of delight in the other, is essential.

Craig's example –

My mother's story -

Worship of God is basically that. It is looking at Jesus and saying, "I love you".

(5) "Goodbye"

Part of relating is saying goodbye.

Conversations end. Meals end. Meetings end. Holidays end.

Relationships end. Marriages end. Lives end.

The funeral prayer ... Go forth Christian soul on your journey from this world.

At the end of a painful relationship we can say ... "God be with you".

It is good to say proper goodbyes. To bring to a conclusion our meeting.
To leave satisfied. To say what needs to be said. To leave without regrets.

Even in everyday domestic relationships it is good to say goodbye.
We don't know when we will meet again or if we will meet again.
So say goodbye.

"Goodbye" is a shortened for of "God be with you". It is a blessing. Use it.

Hello

Thank you

I'm sorry

I love you

Goodbye