

St Martins C3 – February 12, 2023

Growing Together – Going Against the Flow

Sermon Notes:

In this series, we are looking at the importance of growing to become more like Jesus. Surrounding ourselves with others is essential to our journey of faith.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

Here is the value we are promoting into 2023:

Every St Martins C3 member should commit to discipling relationships where they invest in others and others invest in them to grow closer to Christ, live a Christian lifestyle and fulfil their mission to the world.

There are two ways to do discipleship. One follows the pattern of the world, the other reflects the Biblical image of the Church.

Picture One: The Pattern of the World

It used to be the primary concern was the good of society. Secondary was the good of the community. Then the good of the family. Last was the good of the individual. Now the individual comes before all else.

This way of thinking has affected the way Christians approach discipleship. My faith is primarily an individual journey between me and Jesus. But when discipleship becomes just about my personal growth I tend to make faith in God all about me which can lead to error.

Pciture Two: The Church in the New Testament

Image One - The Body of Christ

Read Ephesians 4:15-16

The Church is to be a group of people that move together and work together and support each other to grow together.

Image Two – God’s Team

Read 1 Peter 2:9

There is something special going on for followers of Jesus. They were more than individuals they were a team, called to bring the love and reality of Jesus to the world.

Image Three – Family

Read Galatians 6:10

The church is like a family or a household. We are whanau. We are all related as the children of God through our shared belief in Jesus and our filling with the Holy Spirit.

Does it Really Matter?

It really does. Research has shown that those who involve themselves in purposeful Christ honouring community grow closer in their relationship to Jesus. Individual, unchurched faith does not easily make disciples!

A commitment to church is not a religious duty but a means to transformation! Will we choose to go against culture and commit to these relationships? It will require something of us, but it will be worth it.

Questions for Connect Groups:

In what ways do you see how our culture flows towards individualism?

How is this different from the images of the Church that the Bible portrays?

Look at the value stated on the first page. What stands out to you about it?

What impact have others had in your discipleship journey?

*What other discipling relationships do you have in your life?
How important are these relationships to you?*

Why do you think individual commitment alone does not easily lead to someone growing in their faith?

*“Because Covid has been so hard it’s become important to focus on what is easy and not overdo our commitments.”
Discuss this statement and how this season has changed your commitments.*

What things make it difficult to regularly attend a connect group? What would cause you to commit to attend regularly?

How can you resist culture and invest anew in discipling relationships?

Monday Devotion: Koinonia

Read 1 John 1:6-7

The New Testament is rich with words and images describing the true Christian church. One of these words is the Greek word 'koinonia'. It is used consistently about the nature of the early church, its attitude and its source of unity.

Koinonia is a Greek word commonly translated into English as "communion," "partnership," or "fellowship". Its root is in the word "koinos" meaning, "a having in common". It is used nineteen times in the New Testament, fourteen by Paul, three times by John, once by Luke, and once by the writer of Hebrews.

Koinonia is a concept that is still relevant today. In discovering how the word was used and what it tells us about the early Christian community, we glimpse the church's goal in the 21st century. The New Testament writings reveal more than a word but an inspiring and challenging way of living. For koinonia is far more than a mere fellowship of believers in God or unity around a common cause; it requires a partnership with God and through Him with the people of His purpose.

As we track the word koinonia this week, let us ask ourselves the question of whether we are living up to this high ideal.

Pray

Ask God to help you partner with his people as you partner with him.

Tuesday Devotion: Relationship to God

Read 2 Corinthians 13:12-14; 1 Corinthians 1:9-10

Koinonia is not limited to human relationships. It is also used about our connection with God. Paul saw fellowship with God as more than a casual relationship but a partnership in the life and ideals of Jesus.

Our relationship with God will then be the lens through which we have a relationship with others.

In Paul's final blessing of 2 Corinthians 13, the Corinthians are encouraged to have koinonia with the Spirit and greet each other with Christian love. The two are linked. Paul desired the church's love for each other to be as strong as their love of God and the grace of Jesus.

Then, in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul tells the Corinthians that God has called them into koinonia with Jesus, and he appeals for them to be 'perfectly united' in Jesus' name. Again, there is an undeniable link between koinonia with God and koinonia with God's people.

Today as you submit yourself to God, consider how you can be as connected with other Christians as you long to be with Jesus.

Pray

Ask God to reveal the partnership he has given you and how this partnership can be extended to other Christians.

Wednesday Devotion: Trinity

Read John 17

When I went to Bible College, I had to do a lot of assignments. What they were asking me to do was always different, but a few words seemed to pop up in most assignments. “Compare” and “contrast” were in many assignments I did, but the phrase that popped up in pretty much all of them was, “reflect on this trinitarianly”.

To be honest, I didn’t quite know what my lecturers meant by “reflect on this trinitarianly”. Then I read John 17 and understood more what my lecturers were looking for me to write.

When Jesus prayed in John 17 for the people of God to be united, he used the Trinity as an example of unity. As one writer suggests, “divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, exist in koinonia, bound together by the bonds of everlasting love.” God is not an individual who relates; he is relationship itself.

The church should display the same deep connection as the Trinity. Reflect on the Trinity today, how God is three and one at the same time, bound in a relationship with giving and receiving.

Pray

Ask God to give you a fresh revelation of who He is, and ask Him to help you be connected with other Christians in the same way.

Thursday Devotion: Relating to Each Other

Read Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:8

Koinonia is first used to reference Christian relationships. Acts 2:42 notes that a hallmark of the early church was their devotion to koinonia. Koinonia is “a communion of common fate and destiny,” says one writer.

This is seen further in Galatians 2:8 when the apostles discern Paul’s calling, and he is given the right hand of koinonia. It is evident through these references that koinonia is more than mere outward friendliness; it implies deep connection.

Koinonia helps us to conceive of unity as a deepening and expanding quality of life together. It is Jesus’ blood that brings this life and deepens this bond.

The church is envisioned to have a deep relationship with Jesus and, through Him, a unifying partnership with each other. This unity should transcend the differences the church has too often focussed on and drive all Christians to be, through word and action, the people of God.

Today, focus on one way that you can give koinonia to someone distant right now, for example, by encouraging someone in their ministry or inviting someone over for a meal.

Pray

Pray for someone you know is struggling right now and show your support for them from afar.

Friday Devotion: In the Local Church

Read Philippians 2:1-11

One writer said, “the local church is ... the obvious place of concretely expressing koinonia.” So the local church should be the ultimate place of sharing with each other through God.

Koinonia is expressed through more than friendly conversation after Sunday morning worship – though that is a great place to start. Koinonia is evident through the deeper unity of people invested in what God is doing. “It has to do with a shared vision, person, goal, or project in which the members are substantially invested.”

Ultimately the church must be more than an insular club but a means for transformation. When people come into a church, they should sense something different about the environment. There should be a purpose that is apparent to all.

When the church of God can live out true koinonia, it is an expression of the kingdom of God and a witness to the world of the nature of God. This means that church today must have the hallmark of love. It is incumbent upon the people of God to look beyond differences and cling to that which makes them the same, the koinonia with the Spirit through Jesus.

Pray

Ask God to help St. Martins C3 to be a place of great community.