**Friendship Redefined**

**Week 6 - Blood Not Required – Blood Required**

March 17, 2024

Trinity Church – Catherine Howie

**INTRODUCTION**

Staff pastor at Trinity

It’s been quite a while since I’ve been able to bring the message on a Sunday

Mostly because…

**Illustration - My broken shoulder journey**

* May 25 – Joy of the Lord is your strength – keep eyes on God, not on his blessings
* Plain x-ray photo
* Bone healing for 8 weeks was not too bad, X-ray photo with red “W”
* Then PT began – frozen shoulder
* First session – PAIN
* After the second session I sobbed (not a crier!), no progress and so much pain?
* I’m not a gym rat, every exercise is awkward… at first
* Doing a lot of little things over and over again (describe one) for months
* Now at about 95% recovery
* This was a physical journey, but it’s similar to friendships

**Intro series – Friendship Re-defined**

* Check out the entire series on the website – share on social media
* Get the free book in the lobby
* Next week Pastor Mike will be back to close the series
* Today – Chapter 6 about relationships in the church:

“Blood NOT required; Blood REQUIRED”

* How will they know we are Christ’s disciples?  By our love for one another.

**Caution – Church Hurt**

* Church hurt – it’s real – check out Mike’s book for some practical steps – page 85
* Not minimizing this, but situations are so different, it’s better to work through church hurt with individuals, rather than in a sermon
* We REALLY want to help you – email me, I will make sure someone reaches out!
* The church is God’s best provision for meaningful relationships, so even though there have been abuses in the past, we are going to talk through the positive aspects of the church

**TEXT -** Eph 2:19-22

19 You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

**Context**

Paul is writing to Christians in the Church at Ephesus

* Composed mostly Gentiles (non-Jews), and including some Jews
* Ephesus was a large cosmopolitan city on the Mediterranean (Turkey today)

There were outlying villages considered part of the city that extended 30 miles from its center—much like our suburbs here in Indy

Letter – we don’t know the situation for writing, we only have Paul’s answer

* + It seems that Gentiles are not united with Jewish Christians
    - If they *were* united, Paul would not have to tell them to be united
    - (Parents don’t tell their kids to clean their rooms unless they are messy.)
  + 2:11 – remember, as Gentiles separate from Christ, you were excluded from God’s people, foreigners to the covenant, without promise, without hope, without God.
  + 2:13 – **But now** you who were far have been brought near through the blood of Christ
  + 2:18 – for through Christ we both (Gentiles and Jews) have access to the Father by one Spirit
    - There was natural disunity in the church, maybe not any bad feelings
      * Likeness attracts, differences separate
    - The Ephesians were not living into the life Christ died to give them
      * Their separateness was not good

**Two main types of disunity, or separateness, today:**

1. Disunity between groups

* The last few years our society has become increasingly divided
* This is also true of the church, sadly
  + This leads to a partial expression of the body of Christ
    - to one another – we lack richness
    - to the world – they don’t see Christian unity
  + How will they know we are Christ’s disciples?  
     By our love for one another.
  + We can’t love one another if we are separate
    - Differences separate us: age, ethnicity, family background (blue collar, academia, business, medical)
    - Why? Fear of the unfamiliar (un-family)

1. Disunity between individuals

* People today are more connected than ever through technology
  + But we are not present with one another
  + The type of connection Pastor Mike has been sharing in this series:
    - Interdependent, physically close, authentic, present with one another, and able to work through conflicts and differences
    - This doesn’t happen through connection on our devices
* This leads to intense loneliness and an anxiety epidemic
* Science knows loneliness is not good for humans. (The Better Health Channel)

Studies have shown loneliness can cause disrupted sleep patterns, elevated blood pressure, and increased cortisol (a stress hormone), a suppressed immune system, decrease contentment, antisocial behavior, depression, and suicide, increase the risk of obesity, inflammation and high blood pressure which can lead to heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

* My darkest days during PT were when I was in my sewing room alone doing my exercises
* Nowhere in the Bible is doing life on my own held up as something to aspire to!
* In fact, from the very beginning God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone.

Summary: two main types of disunity in our world

1. groups separated from each other (with or without tension)
2. individuals who are isolated or independent from others

*The solution to both types of disunity is the same*

**The answer in the language of the passage (NERD ALERT!)**

Look at this sentence. Do you notice anything odd?

The only transportation available to get the imports to the port on the sea was to make them portable by portaging around the falls.

There are five words in it based on the root word *port* which means *to carry.*

The only trans**port**ation available to get the im**port**s to the **port** on the sea was to make them **port**able by **port**aging around the falls.

The repetition of *port* emphasizes the point of this sentence is moving things.

It also sounds weird.

Paul does something similar in Eph 2:19-22.

It isn’t obvious to us in the English translation, but it is in Greek.

**FAMILY**

5 different Greek words in these 4 verses use the

Greek root οἶκος (oikos)

which means family, household; my people (tribe)

2 of these words in particular in the first and last verses:

2:19 – *Strangers/sojourners* – paroikos

near the family, but not of it; without a share

Like live-in help – Grandma Stier

Like immigrants – living among a new culture, but not part of it

2:22 – *built together* – synoikodomeo

to build up something into a unity/totality out of several things

God created us with a need for *oikos*

He makes a way for these deep relationships IN CHRIST:

*21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.*

*22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

Paul is not talking about a physical building,

This oikos-family he is describing is THE CHURCH.

**THE CHURCH IS…**

The church is not a social obligation to fit into a crowded week.

The church is not something to attend.

The church is a family.

How awkward would it be to “attend” family events?

We don’t “attend” church any more than we “attend” Thanksgiving dinner

**This** is our oikos – look around, these are “our people.”

The church is a family we are born into by the blood of Jesus.

Just like a baby who doesn’t do anything to come into the family,

The blood of Jesus unites us like nothing else does!

We surrender to Jesus, and BAM! We are part of the church!

I have seen so many expressions of Trinity family in the past few months:

* caring for people after major surgeries
* helping people through relational crises
* bringing food and gift cards when people need help
* filling the generous living basket for our GP friends
* praying for one another

The church is where we belong, and where we love one another.

1. Belonging

All are welcome in the church – there is no wall

There may be walls in society – but they don’t belong in the church

Gal 3:26-28 *In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

**YOU BELONG HERE** (turn, say it to three people near you)

1. Responsibility

All are needed in the church

When you aren’t here, we feel the loss (on-line)

**YOU ARE NEEDED HERE** (turn, say it to three people near you)

How will they know we are Christ’s disciples? By our love for one another.

Because we are family-oikos: we get the blessing, ***and*** we have responsibility

The blessing of belonging

The responsibility of creating community…

Which becomes another blessing!

**Closing -** LEAN INTO THE CHURCH

* Away from division, away from independence – ask for help and give help
* The enemy wants us to lean away from one another because it takes us toward isolation and loneliness
* If we lean into his church, we lean toward God and his will for us
* If we lean into his church, we lean toward God and his will for us
* We love by including and welcoming… over and over again

Until relationships deepen from many small interactions over time

My arm didn’t become strong again with one big effort

It took thousands of repetitions over months to make it healthy

It’s the same with friendships – many small interactions over time

Will it be awkward? Yep.

Going into differences isn’t comfortable. True.

Do it anyway.

“Pastor loves you!”

Do it anyway!

Look around – these are your people!

How will they know we are Christ’s disciples? By our love for one another.

Story to close

Right before COVID we started a Trinity Group in our neighborhood

We had two things in common – Trinity and living in Sunblest

The first year it was fun –

especially being creative about where and how to meet with social distancing

The second year we talked through some deep concepts.

The third we began trusting one another with our hurts and praying through them

This year, together we have walked through really difficulties

This past week one of the women sent all the other women a video that describes where we are after four years of many interactions

* In it, Simon Sinek and a friend talk about a study on friendship. He says: ”When someone is struggling, all they need is 8 minutes for a friend to hold space with them to make them feel better. And so now, we have a code word. When one of us is struggling, the text is, “Do you have 8 minutes?” And that simply means, “I need you.” And then, he starts to cry.
* The comments under the video reveal the longing people have for this kind of friendship. One says: “I need friends with 8 minutes or even less...but i hardly have any when i come to think of it.. saddest thing is … I'm also becoming one of them.” (One that doesn’t have 8 minutes.)

Remember the movie **Back to the Future**?

Marty McFly played by Michael J. Fox goes into the past where he meets his mom.

He does something nice, and she starts to fall for him.

He spends the rest of the movie trying to get his mom to notice his dad,

so he can be born in the future

This is a common movie plot—

* Something small gets changed in the past and affects all kinds of things
* Maybe we can radically change the future by doing something small in the present?

Like many small interactions over time produce deep and meaningful friendships.

Take out a Next Steps card -

**What is your next step to lean into the Trinity family?**

* If you’ve been “attending” church for a while, share your contact info with us so you can more fully belong to the Trinity family.
* Join a Trinity Group.
* Be baptized or join the church (Easter).

Make the public declaration: “I’m here.” (Like Pastor Mike’s dad a few sermons back.)

* If you are serving on a Trinity Team, consider reaching out to the someone you serve with.
* Bonus challenge – get together with someone who is different from you—cross a generational boundary, background, culture, language. YES – it’s awkward…. Do it anyway!

**How will they know we are Christ’s disciples? By our love for one another.**

We love by including and welcoming… over and over again

Until relationships deepen from many small interactions over time

My arm didn’t become strong again with one big effort

It took thousands of repetitions over months to make it healthy

It’s the same for healthy friendships.

Will it be awkward at the beginning? Yep.

Going into differences isn’t comfortable.

Do it anyway.

“Pastor loves you!”

Do it anyway!

Look around – these are your people!

This is your oikos – this is your family

**Resources**

The Better Health Channel website

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Strong-relationships-strong-health>

Sinek video and story

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-IcQ2QFrSA4>

<https://simonsinek.com/stories/the-incredible-power-of-an-eight-minute-catch-up-with-a-friend/>

Snodgrass, K. (1996). *Ephesians*. Zondervan, Logos Bible Software.  
  
  
Friendship Redefined

* “The family of God stands as the strongest family bond, surpassing earthly relationships and offering an eternal and unbreakable connection between believers. The Bible … emphasizes that this family transcends barriers of nationality, social status, and gender, uniting all who believe in Christ as children of God. As we embrace the family of God, we experience the deep sense of belonging, love, and inheritance that accompanies our divine adoption, fostering a bond that endures beyond time and space.” (p. 80-81)