

Week Five: March 28, 2018 – April 3, 2018



**HIS
COMMUNITY**

I am participating in a community of followers of Jesus on mission to the world.

‘Community’ is not simply a way to refer to the place where people live. Community is a profound experience where you find yourself cared for and you care for others. Community stands in stark contrast to the self-interest and isolationism that is typical of the experience of many.

Community is usually best seen when people join together in a common purpose. The opportunity to join with others in a common cause is a platform for the development of community as well as an experience of community. For followers of Jesus, joining in the mission that Jesus has commanded us to carry out is a great opportunity for us to experience community.



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Participation in community is not merely sharing local services and institutions but the increased individualism and isolationism of our day have led to that idea. People tend to live in proximity to one another instead of living in community with one another.

In the days when pioneers were settling our region they experienced community as a requirement of survival and not a nice option. Not only did they find their needs fulfilled through the skills of others in the community but they also found their place in the community as they used their skills to contribute to the whole. In other words, they were contributors and not just consumers. There is an application here for our understanding of Christian community.

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Ephesians 4:1-13

Let's Get Personal:

Have you ever experienced community? What was different about that experience and others in which you might have had some personal interchange? What are some ways that you can contribute to the community experience of other people? What were some ways that Jesus built community with his disciples?

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me?

TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

OBEY – What are some ways that I should act on this?



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The apostle Paul understood that the community of Jesus had a fundamentally different character than other communities. The followers of Jesus exhibited humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and love. With these characteristics they stood out and note was taken that they had been with Jesus who had also exhibited these characteristics. In Antioch they started calling these followers of Jesus, Christians.

Today we observe Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane as he surrendered himself to drink the cup of suffering that would extend life to us. That event and those that we will be remembering over these next days are the events out of which the Christian community was birthed.

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Mark 14:12-42

Let's Get Personal:

When Jesus met with his disciples over the meal that we have come to call 'The Last Supper,' one particularly moving part of the narrative is the fact that one of his followers was set to betray him. Perhaps we have experienced betrayal at some point by those who are close to us. Can we follow Jesus in forgiveness? We will no doubt need what is extended to us through what we will observe over the next days.

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The life of community is usually the result of a cooperative effort. Many people can be credited for some contribution that they each have made to build the community. Rarely does the existence of community all hang on one person. However, when talking about the Christian community it really does all hang on one who was hanged for the whole community.

Today is Good Friday. In many ways this day marks the darkest day in world history. The human community failed and we killed the Lord of Glory. Yet we can truly call this day, 'good.' It was not the betrayal by one member of the troupe of Jesus followers that made this otherwise dark day good. Nor was it the denial by another that made it 'good.' Rather, it was the accomplishment of that day that made it 'good.' Jesus laid down his life as a ransom for many and the seeds of Christian community were planted.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Luke 23:26-43

Luke 23:44-49

Luke 23:50-56

Let's Get Personal:

Is this day a dark day for you or a day of celebration? If it is a dark day, give thought to what is a cause for celebration in what Jesus did for you by dying on the cross. If it is a day of celebration, give some thought as to why this is a dark day.

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Within our wider Canadian community there are many people who are new to us and our country. For those of us who are in the majority culture of our society it might be difficult to appreciate what it is like to be part of a newcomer minority. We can fully understand why they are inclined to want to spend a lot of time with others who speak the same language and have had life experiences that are similar to their own. Jesus' early followers must have experienced an overwhelming minority feeling as they huddled together away from the crowd that had taken their Lord. Perhaps, on this day following the observance of Jesus' death we could give thought to the responsibilities and opportunities we have in our minority position as followers of Jesus within our broader Canadian community.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Matthew 27:57-61

Matthew 27:62-66

Luke 24:13-18

Let's Get Personal:

Have you ever had times that you felt abandoned? Do you have people around you that might have that feeling? Do you think you have something to offer them? What difference does it make to your sense of abandonment to know what you will be celebrating tomorrow? Why not tell others about this one who loved you and brought you into the community of the beloved?

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Anchor

Walking in the Light

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:7-9)



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Community is the experience of those who have something in common. We have already considered that simply sharing local services does not really provide a strong experience of community. As followers of Jesus – the risen Lord who came out of the tomb on the third day Jesus – we have a strong source of the unity that yields community.

What do followers of Jesus have in common?

The short answer is JESUS! The more we become like Jesus and depend upon the Spirit of Jesus we are bound together in community. We live out His love. He has paid a great price for us. We belong to Him. We find our identity in Him! All that we have and are flows out of this ‘short’ answer.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Luke 24:36-49

John 20:19-29

Let’s Get Personal:

One of the greatest experiences of community is found in the joy of bringing others into the community. The way to join the Christian community is to accept Jesus’ invitation to join. That is the invitation that he has put on our lips to share. Have you extended that invitation to anyone during this Lenten season?

My Reflections

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One of the great barriers to community is the lack of unity. We have been taught that one of the strengths of our wider Canadian community is the fact that we can tolerate a lot of diversity. Sadly, in the present push for diversity the clear message of the one that can truly bring unity is often pushed to the side. Unfortunately as well, the Christian community does not always demonstrate the sort of unity that would provide a healthy view of the unity that God desires.

Jesus prayed, "... I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:20-23)

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

John 17:1-26

Let's Get Personal:

Have you been moved by Jesus' love for the world? What do you think he would have you do as you celebrate his resurrection from the dead to share his love with the world represented by the people that will cross your path?

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