

14th October 2018

Vision Expressed - Community

Following sermon from Matt McLaren Passage: Romans 12: 9-21

Introduction

What does the word 'community' mean to you?

Think of community groups you belong to: including the church. What benefits do we all gain from being in a 'community'? How did it feel when you first became part of that community? How can each of us ensure we are playing our part to make community work as well as possible?

Read: Romans 12: 9-21

This passage tells us so much about how we should work to be community. Matt told us on Sunday that this amazing passage contains 28 exhortations to us. *[They are listed at the end of this study]*. Let's consider the four he majored on, and then, if there's time, pick one or two others out of the list and consider them *[not forgetting to allow a good time for prayer]*.

1. Love must be sincere

This is the crux of the whole passage; everything else flows from sincere love.

How would you define 'sincere love'?

Have a look at 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. What does it tell us about love? How would we apply those attributes to ourselves? How would those attributes help us to be a good community? And how well do those attributes reflect the character of God? After all, God is love (1 John 4:8)!

2. Cling to what is good

If you read the news, or watch on TV or listen to it on the radio, it's easy to get depressed. Even allowing for the fact that good news stories don't often make interesting reading/ watching/listening so tend to get overlooked, things are pretty gloomy. So what the world needs is some exciting good news: like the good news of Jesus for example!

Through clinging on to what is good we can bring goodness into a fallen world. What good things do we need to cling on to? Consider what things God would consider good in our lives. Psalms 1, 119 and 128, to name but three, are all clear on the 'goodness' of keeping to God's ways; Proverbs 7 v2 tell us to keep God's commands 'as the apple of your eye'. And what does Psalm 133 tell us is good? Is community a key to clinging to what is good?

What does 'cling' mean? 'Clinging' sounds like desperation: why do we need such determination to keep goodness in our lives?

3. Keep your spiritual fervour

Matt mentioned on Sunday that when we're new converts we have fervour. How would you define 'fervour'? *[There is a list of possible words for 'fervour' on the last page of the notes]* How did you feel when you first became a Christian? Why might you feel less 'fervour' as you get older in the faith? Why is it important that we should have fervour in our faith in the times we are living in? How might you rekindle your fervour?

4. Live in harmony with one another

Matt referred to the way in music you can put three different notes together and make a richer, warmer, more complete sound. In music, most harmony needs three notes and certain notes go together well to make a sweet sound. But actually music written with just those sweet sounds is pretty boring. If you carefully blend notes which shouldn't really go together you can create all sorts of musical effects; it can push the music in a particular direction, it can send music off in a totally new direction, it can bring deep levels of intensity and beauty and create every emotion going. Those same notes blended wrongly can also make an awful cacophony and sound terrible! How might this suggest our church could create beautiful harmony? Do we want to sound like some of the worst 20th century music, like an oompah band (just using very basic but harmless harmonies) or something amazingly beautiful and profound? How might we ensure we get just the right effect? What sacrifices or adjustments might each of us have to make in order to ensure that 'God's people (*ie us!*) live together in unity?'

Prayer

As we come together in community we can make great strides forward as a church, offering a sanctuary and an alternative to an increasingly troubled world: with the promise of salvation! Pray that God will teach each of us how to live together in unity and will fill us with His love.

Matt encouraged us on Sunday to pray for our leaders. Dave is away on holiday at the moment, Mike is holding the fort and we are currently considering together whether Tim Cowles should be our next elder; please pray for all three of them as they seek to take our church onwards.

Love in action: exhortations in Romans 12

1. Love must be sincere
2. Hate what is evil
3. Cling to what is good.
4. Be devoted to one another in love.
5. Honour one another above yourselves.
6. Never be lacking in zeal
7. Keep your spiritual fervour
8. Serve the Lord.
9. Be joyful in hope,
10. Be patient in affliction
11. Be faithful in prayer
12. Share with the Lord's people who are in need.
13. Practise hospitality.
14. Bless those who persecute you
15. Bless and do not curse.
16. Rejoice with those who rejoice;
17. Mourn with those who mourn.
18. Live in harmony with one another
19. Do not be proud
20. Be willing to associate with people of low position
21. Do not be conceited
22. Do not repay anyone evil for evil
23. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone
24. Live at peace with everyone
25. Do not take revenge
26. leave room for God's wrath
27. Do not be overcome by evil
28. Overcome evil with good.

Synonyms for 'fervour' (Google)

passion, ardour, intensity, zeal, vehemence, emotion, warmth, sincerity, earnestness, avidness, eagerness, keenness, enthusiasm, excitement, animation, vigour, energy, fire, fieriness, heat, spirit, zest, appetite, hunger, urgency; dedication, devoutness, assiduity, commitment, committedness, ardency, passionateness.