

Community – Evening Congregation Camp 2021
Made and Broken Community

You'll be able to download an outline or the full transcript of the sermon on the camp page of the Bundy website

Please feel free to use those if they will help you
Most importantly, please keep your bibles open.

Normally here at Bundy in our sermons
We work through books of the Bible verse by verse
But for a topical series we will be looking at different parts of the Bible
And we won't have the opportunity to drill down into as much detail in those bible passages

With a topical series there's always more risk that things will be taken out of context by the preacher
So as with all things you hear from any preacher,
Always test everything against the Bible.
Bible passages will be given to you in the handout to help you to do that in your own time

These talks were meant to be given on a camp
With all of us gathered in-person – eating, laughing, learning together
The irony is not lost on me
That here I am given these talks on Community in an auditorium with 5 people
And with you watching on your own on YouTube.
It's grieving.
I'm sad and I'm sure many of you are sad too.
Doing camp this way is second-best option by far
I'm glad you're here but we're all grieving
So let's acknowledge that grief in prayer.

Let's pray

All of us long for the type of community that we see on a show like Friends
I'm so glad that streaming services like Netflix
Have brought the shows to you
that I grew up watching at your age
this means that I can use them as sermon illustrations

We want to share a house with a friend like Chandler or Joey
Live across the corridor from our other like friends Monica and Rachel
And hang out at the local café with the rest of the people we get along with like Phoebe and Ross
Friends who love us and look out for us and we just all happen to be good looking
This is the kind of community we want
Staying apart during COVID has only reminded us how much we long for this type of community
But is this the kind of community we should be looking for?
And if so, how do you get this kind of community?

As we look at this series on community this weekend, we'll be looking at these things:

Community – Made and Broken

Then tomorrow morning: **Truth and Grace in Community**

And then on Sunday evening – **Love in Community**

Let's pray before we begin

This series of talks is not intended to give detailed answers to every question
We have about community

But I'm hoping it will begin a conversation
Lord-willing, as we begin to re-gather again in the coming months,
I hope these talks will get you thinking again about what makes for good community
And to consider, more importantly
What God says makes for good community
And to make that the foundation for rebuilding community in the Evening Congregation

If you do a word search for "community" in the Bible you will not find it.
But the bible talks a lot about relationships.
And in these talks I will often use the term community to talk about relationships
Relationships are at the heart of community.

The Bible tells us that that God made us for relationships
So if you want to understand community you need to go back to your Creator.
That's where the bible starts.

**So here's the first point I want to make from the bible this evening about community
We've been made by God for God and others**

At the start of the Bible in Genesis chapter 1
The pinnacle of God's creative work is people

Verse 26

"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness"

Then in verse 27

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female
he created them.

Nothing else in all of God's creation bears God's image
And much can be said about what it means to be made in God's image
But I want to draw your attention to just one aspect of being made in God's image
And that is relationship
Relationship with God
And relationship with others

We are made, first and foremost for relationship with God
This is how the apostle Paul says it in Acts 17
When he addresses the Athenians
And he looks back at creation

Verse 24

²⁴"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not
live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed
anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶From one man he
made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth;
and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷God did this
so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from
any one of us. ²⁸'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have
said, 'We are his offspring.'

We were made by God for God
Notice verse 27 says
God is not far from any one of us – that includes you
Now for whatever reason you might feel that God is far from you
Or you are far from Him
But in reality He isn't

He made you in His image
You reflect something of God's dignity and wonder
And you may feel distant from God
But in reality He is closer than you imagine
God wants to have relationship with you
He wants you to reach out to Him
Because He has already reached out to you
When He sent His Son Jesus into the world
That is God opening His arms out to you and saying come find me.

Not only did God create us for relationships
But God is the source of all relationships

Genesis 1 verse 26 says "Let us" make man in our image
Who is the "us"
Well some say that the "us" refers to God and the other beings he made before making people
Being like the angels
But many also say and I agree that the "us" is referring to the Trinity
One God in three persons - Father, Son and Spirit
We see that in the start of Genesis 1
God the Spirit was hovering the formless earth
In John chapter 1 - the eternal Word of God was both with God and was God at the beginning
Before the creation of the world
John goes on to tell us that the Word is none other than God's Son - Jesus Christ

Before creation there was already a community of relationships
God the Father, Son and Spirit - already had loving, other-centred community with each other

You see that raises an important point
Why does God want to be in relationship with us?
God didn't make us because He was lonely
God didn't make us because He was desperate for relationship
He already had a community
God made us to know Him *for our benefit*
Why?

Acts 17 verse 28
In him we live and move and have our being.
We need God

Without God, life doesn't work properly
Relationships don't work properly
Creatures need their Creator
We were made by God for God because we need God.

The Psalms are a great book in the bible for pandemics
Because these songs are often the experience of people who have been humbled in life
Things have been stripped away from them
Suffering has refined them in such a way that the conclusion they reach is this
I need God

The author of Psalm 73 envies the prosperity and carefree lives of others
Even those who couldn't care less about God
It's very easy when you are in lockdown
To envy others who seem to live carefree lives
But by the end of the Psalm this is where the Psalmist lands

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

We were made to need God

In his ministry, Jesus often retreated away from the crowds who wanted so much from him
And he did this either by himself or with his disciples
To spend time with God His Father in prayer
Jesus knew His need for His Father
Do you know your need for God?

I suspect that dealing with COVID-19 and lockdown
has been harder for all of us than we care to admit
Feeling frail and helpless has been hard for us
Dealing with grief and boredom and isolation from others has stripped us bare
How have you been dealing with all of this?

Where have you found your comfort?
UberEats?
Bingeing another series on Netflix?
Endorphins from exercise?
Online shopping on Amazon?
Porn?
Alcohol?
We try so many ways don't we?
To fill the God-shaped hole in our hearts
And yet none of those ways truly satisfy like God does

Jesus said in Matthew 22

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.
Community must begin with communing with God
This is what you were made for

Maybe, just maybe
This pandemic, these lockdowns
Are God's way of getting our attention to remind us how much we need him
We are not strong and independent as we like to believe
We are weak and frail
Creatures who need their Creator
And while there are a lot of barriers to having community with one another
There is nothing stop us from having community with God.

So cry out to Him
Ask for His help
Stop running to all the other options and run to Him
Because when everything else is stripped away
All that we have left is our relationship with God
And He has and always will be more than enough

But God also made us for others

Genesis Chapter 2 verse 18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

And what's notable about that statement

Is that right through chapter one God said everything was good

But here's the first thing that is not good.

Man was not made to be alone

So God created woman for man

A helper, a companion, someone who could be his equal as they rule creation together under God

God made us for relationship with other image bearers

The second greatest commandment Jesus gave was this

Matthew 22

Love your neighbour as yourself

This command assumes that we love ourselves quite naturally

But we were made not to be lovers of ourselves but others

Marriage is the first community that God created between people in Genesis

But clearly marriage is not the only community in the Bible

God's people are a community described in different ways

God's people are a family – brothers and sisters with God our Heavenly Father

God's people are a bride – with Christ as our husband

God's people are a body of many parts with Christ as our head

God's people - the church

Is a community made by God to gather together

That is the literal meaning of the word church

Ekklesia – the gathering

That's why you've been finding this lockdown so hard

You were never made for isolation from others

You were made to gather with others

Being an image bearer of God means being connected to others in relationship

And believers in Jesus express that bond between them and other believers

By meeting together regularly

I'm an introvert so I don't mind time on my own

I didn't mind the first lockdown in Melbourne but this is now number six

And even us introverts are struggling

Because we were not made to live like this

Technologies like YouTube Live and Zoom are useful

But it's not the same is it?

God gave us bodies

Relationship in it's fullest is embodied relationship

Don't forget that lesson after this pandemic

None of these technologies

Including all the social media platforms that we use

Are any substitute for face-to-face, embodied relationship

A virtual thumbs up is nothing like a real hug

During COVID I have conducted small weddings and even smaller funerals

And it is heartbreaking to see the closest friends and family members

Not able to rejoice and grieve with people in person

We have been made by God for others

Let me ask you this

How much is your idea of community centred around you?

The whole notion of a selfie is that it's all about you
Instagram and Facebook
Are platforms designed to be all about you
Boy I sound like the old guy that I said I would never be
When I was young
I know people like to use social media for noble purposes
But let's be honest
How often have you spent time on Instagram
And afterwards felt envious of others
Envious of their bodies
Envious of people who seem to be living their best life compared to you
How often have you been angered after reading a post on Facebook
That you had to respond with outrage
Not caring how that person felt afterwards
If this is the case
Then you have an idea of community that is centred around you
And that is not how God made you
You don't find contentment and peace on social media
But if that's all the community you have
Then we all need to work harder don't we
To rebuild community when we come out of lockdown
God made us for Him
And He made us for others

This brings us to our second point

Community has been broken by our sin so we need Jesus

In the first two chapters of Genesis
We saw this wonderful picture of loving, other-centred relationship
Beautiful community made by God

But by chapter 3 of Genesis,
We see a very different picture

Genesis 3 verse 4

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

God gave Adam and Eve everything.
And they lost it all in rebellion against God
The bible calls this sin
The serpent casts doubt about God's goodness
And man and woman act on it
They want to be like God in verse 5
They want to be God's equal
They reject God's authority
Sin enters into the relationships
And destroys the wonderful community between man and woman
And between people and God,
God would take evening walks in the Garden to commune with Adam and Eve

But now because of their sin
Adam and Eve are hiding their guilt and shame from God
And when God points out their sin
We see the first but certainly not the last blame shifting incident in history

Verse 12

¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

Adam is blaming both God and His wife
This is what sin does to community
Sin breaks community

God made us to be image bearers of Himself
We were meant to reflect His glory not replace His glory
But sin says no to God and yes to self
I want to call the shots
I want to be God

This is how the apostle Paul put it in Romans 1 verse 25

²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

The Bible calls this idolatry.
Idolatry is not just the worship of bad things.
But it's often a good thing that we turn into a God-thing.
Community was God's creation.
But community can so easily become idolatry
What do I mean by that?
We often replace God with our community
Instead of loving God with all of our soul, strength and mind
We expect our other relationships to meet our deepest needs
And we want to determine how we do that
If community is the idol that you pursue
Without God at the centre
The more you pursue it
The less likely you will find it

Here's a history lesson
Back in the 90s
The show that I liked was Seinfeld
For a few years, Seinfeld and Friends overlapped
Two of the most popular series on TV
And Seinfeld was like an anti-Friends
People who hung out with each other
Not because they loved each other
But because they didn't have better options
My favourite character – George Constanza
Was this sad guy who always mucks up every relationship
Because he either wants it too much and messes it up
Or he envies what everyone else has and messes it up
We want life to be like Friends
But life turns out to be more like Seinfeld

Look at how Paul describes the effects of sin on our relationships
Romans 3 verse 13

Sin poisons our speech so that we cut others down
Sin drives us to violence
Sin breaks peace between people
Sin causes us to shake our fist at God
Sin destroys community with God and with each other
And Paul's conclusion is that all of us are guilty of sin

I wonder how many of you believe that marriage will meet your deepest needs
Or maybe if you could just find a share house with the right people
Or if you find the perfect church and end up in the right bible study group
Well then it will all work out for you
Because of sin,
Your sin and the sin of others
you won't find what you're looking for
There is no marriage that will meet all your needs
No friendship can bear the weight that you expect it to
And no church or bible study group is perfect
You will inevitably be disappointed
If you are looking for community in place of God
So what should you be looking for...

If you do a word search in the bible you won't find the word "community"
But you will find the word "koinonia"

It's a Greek word in the New Testament
It appears about 20 times in describing the relationships between believers
and between believers and Jesus himself
The meaning of Koinonia is deeper than friendship
The word "fellowship" is often used to try to capture the meaning of it
Koinonia is deep partnership, a common sharing together of life
The Lord's Supper that we celebrate each month is a meal that expresses this koinonia
The first appearance of koinonia is in Acts chapter 2 describing the early Christians in Jerusalem

Verse 42

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common.

⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Here is koinonia in action
And I think this is the community we are all looking for
No hoarding toilet paper
But everyone looking out for one each other
Meeting each other daily
Selling possessions and sharing with others in need
Thankfulness, generosity, praising God,
having favour with those outside their community
It's all very appealing in a Friends-like kind of way

But it didn't necessarily last, even in Jerusalem
By chapter 8 of the book of Acts
We read that a persecution broke out against the Christians

And we read that all the believers except for the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria

Many since then have tried to capture that sense of community and failed
Dictators, Cult leaders,
Church or family leaders have chased after their own vision of community
Only to destroy their communities
By their own desire to control and manipulate
You see you don't find community by searching for it or trying to create it yourself
Because when you put that much hope in other people to meet your needs
You will be disappointed
Just as much as you will disappoint them.
So how do you get this koinonia kind of community
The Bible's answer is Jesus
You look for Jesus

The apostle John writes in 1 John 1 about Jesus

1 John 1

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.
And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Let me explain the logic of what John is saying
John is saying here that he knew Jesus
And had koinonia with Jesus
In sharing about Jesus with his readers
Then they too can share koinonia with him because they have koinonia with Jesus

You see the key to koinonia in the Bible is Jesus
It is coming into deep union with Jesus that gives us the community with others that we long for
Christ is the head of his body the church
A body without a head is dead and lifeless
And so if you want to be part of a dynamic, life-giving community,
that is other centred
It must first be a Christ-centred community
That keeps looking to Jesus
The most healthy and growing marriages that I see in the church
Are the ones where both husband and wife are focussed on Christ
And not on each other
The most loving and caring share houses that I see
Are full of people who are centred on Christ
And not centred on people

Jesus is the ultimate image bearer
He is the very image of the invisible God
The exact representation of God's being – the Bible tells us
If you want to see what humanity is meant to be
You look at Jesus
If you want to know how to live in community
You look at Jesus
And more will be said over the weekend
At how Jesus is the key to the community we all long for

But the first thing we need to do when we look at Jesus
is to repent
This is how the early church began koinonia community

In Acts chapter 2

The Apostle Peter confronts the people of Jerusalem with the devastation of their sin
They crucified Jesus Christ – God’s Son

Verse 36

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of your behaviour

It is to change your mind that Jesus is Lord of your life and not you

Then to change your behavior by giving your life to worshipping and serving Him as your Lord

Repentance is to change your mind that Jesus is your Saviour and not you

And to change your behavior by letting go of your pride and accepting his gift of forgiveness

Through His death on the cross

And in the bible – repentance is a posture in your relationship with Jesus

It’s not doing stuff but an attitude of humble dependence

Which leads to a daily dying to your self-centred sinfulness

And a commitment to giving your life to Jesus each and every day

Looking at Jesus means that we must learn to lament

We’re often good at painting a happy face to present to the world

Even when we feel miserable and broken by sin in ourselves and sin in the world

We don’t want to appear weak

And so we try to fake it until we make it

Maybe if I appear to be winning at life

Then I will win at life

And the bible takes a different approach

The bible is full of lament

Think of the Psalms - Honest cries of grief to God

Think of Jesus weeping with Mary and Martha at death of their brother of Lazarus

And we are told to lament

To recognize the sin broken nature of life

The sin broken nature of our relationships

Jesus said in Matthew 5

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Don’t paint on a fake smile

Be real

Be real with Jesus

Recognise how broken you are broken you are by your sin and the sin of others

Grieve at the consequences of sin

A world of suffering and death

And we you recognize your utter helpless dependence on Jesus

If you do this you will find comfort

You will find hope

This is real community is like
Jesus doesn't settle for faking it until you make it
He wants much more than that for you
And you can be real with him
So lament to him – take your grief and pain to Him

Paul tells us in Romans to
¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

We have to learn a posture of lamenting together
Not trying to fix each other's problems
Not giving pat answers
But learning how to be weak and vulnerable together
As we look to Jesus for the answers

It's hard isn't it
But we need to get beyond the surface with each other
Tomorrow morning, Chris, Jane and I are going to run a workshop on how we can do this better

When we are not in lockdown
We busy ourselves like Martha
When what Jesus wants from us to be like Mary
To be present with him at his feet

Being in lockdown is an opportunity to learn how to be present
Present with Jesus
And present with each other.
It's going to be hard when we come out of lockdown
When we see each other in person again
It's going to be awkward
Learning how to relate again after such a long time
But it's also an opportunity to learn new things
Like learning how to listen
Learning how to be present with each other
Even in the brokenness of sin of suffering
Learn to lament together
And if you learn how to do this
You will find that it builds community more than you can imagine

God made us for God and others
But we have broken that community by our sin
So we need Jesus
We need to learn how to repent and lament

This pandemic has at times,
brought out the worst in our community
And some of those things we are seeing now
Fear, Anger, Hatred, Jealousy
But this need not be the case
The Christ centred community can be different
The Christ centred community can shine in the darkness

Bubonic plague came to the town of Eyam in 1665

By the end of that year, 42 people had died in the town
The minister of the village William Mompesson

Along with the previous minister – Thomas Stanley
Persuaded the villagers not to flee to other towns
But to quarantine themselves
In other words, they locked themselves down
Which would lower the risk of spreading the plague to other parts of England
The people of Eyam went to great lengths to do this
When supplies were dropped off from other villages at the edge of town
The residents of Eyam dug wells with vinegar in them to drop their coins into
To disinfect the coins so they wouldn't infect their suppliers
Church services and prayers meetings took place outdoors
To lower the risk of infection
William Mompesson and his wife Catherine,
devoted themselves to caring for the sick and dying
This is what loving community looks like
According to one account, only 83 people survived out of a population of 350 in Eyam
Catherine Mompesson, aged 27 was amongst those who died and went to be with her Lord

This is what William Mompesson wrote to his patron Lord Halifax
*My dearest dear is gone to her eternal rest
And is invested with the crown of righteousness
Having made a most happy end
Had she loved herself as well as me
She would have fled from the pit of destruction and might have prolonged her days
But she was resolved to die a martyr for my interest.
My drooping spirits are much refreshed with her joys
which I assure myself are unutterable.*

In a world broken by sin, suffering and death
This is the Christ-centred community God made us for.

Let me pray