

Word Notes Sunday 15/05/16
Tony Hodge: Builders 3 – Community

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday, listen to the podcast if you missed the talk <http://www.newmarketcommunitychurch.co.uk/podcasts.htm>.)

Key Text: Matthew 22:34-40

The Sadducees had been silenced by Jesus' teaching, now enter Team Pharisee with a tricky question: "What is the greatest commandment?". They were looking to trick Jesus with a question they couldn't even agree on themselves. Jesus takes them right back to the basics of who God is and what His purpose is for mankind. "Love God with all that you are and your neighbour as yourself". Real Love, active love, sacrificial love.

Jesus answers that way because love is not a passive thing. Love is active and relational; love is the glue that holds relationships, churches and communities together. It's also the route God used to reach his lost children.

Is there more to Jesus summary of the Law than just a set of rules? Yes –it's about God Himself, Father, Son & Holy Spirit. There from the beginning, a community of love – relationship and community and how best to express themselves but through love! But to love who or what? So the "God who is Love" creates a world and places in it mankind in His own image, breathes his own breath into him. Purpose: to love and return love, to express love most fully. Mankind is brought into the heavenly community of love. But man takes a different turn yet God was not to be put off and because God so loved The World, He sent Jesus. Not just because he loved mankind and wanted to fix him but because The World needed God himself to restore the purpose of creation.

The Pharisee is not satisfied. "Who is my neighbour?" he asks and the parable of the Good Samaritan is told as an example to all to show what true love and community looks like. It's not just looking after friends and family, it's about loving the alien, the stranger, even our enemy. Across the years since that day Christian people have been living that out, sacrificial love for the lost, the poor, the hungry, the blind prisoners and marginalised people in many times and places. It's part of the "Go" imperative of the Great Commission. We may feel we have little physical resources but we have the authority of Jesus, the riches of heaven, the power of the Holy Spirit and a loving God just ready to pour out his love through us – we just need to take hold of all we have and go to the world.

Application (*this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points*)

Thinking back across The Story what examples can you remember of God wanting to build community with mankind? In all these cases (even when He seems to be angry) what is God's motivation?

All the Law and Prophets are summarised in the Great Commandment. Read the passage out and then go round the groups saying what Loving God with all your being means to each, then what loving your neighbour as yourself means to each person. What does it mean in the church context, both looking in and outside?

In the blog which Sandra read out ("I went to a Strip Club" <http://tinyurl.com/hnana3d>) The women they visited said their church was different because others just sent them hate mail. How easy is it to judge and condemn people whose lives don't meet our expectations? If you are brave share an example of how you may have reacted this way, even if just your first thoughts.

Our mission statement at NCC says that "We believe our commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will build a great church." What does that mean for you as part of the church community and also the world community? What is your part?

What do you see in your neighbourhood that breaks your heart? What will you do about it, who will you ask to help you? What is the first step?

Witness (*this is the bit where the cell talks, plans and prays about how to share the Good News*)

See the Application section.