

Additional Notes

The Church: A Spiritual Community (Part 6)

The Church as It Was Meant to Be

Jerry Cisar — April 23, 2017

Text: John 13, 15, 17, 20

Introduction

LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.
The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- When you think about the church, do you tend to focus on the church as it was meant to be, or the church as it often is? Why is it important that we recognize both?
- In the 3 scenes we looked at from the Upper Room Discourse (John 13, 15, 17), what does each one say about our relationships to one another?
- How did Jesus washing the feet of the disciples cleanse them? What does this say about what it means for us to wash one another's feet?
- How does the teaching about the vine and the branches speak not only about our being joined to Jesus, but also about our being joined to one another?
- Why is the church's unity, and love between its members vital to the mission of the church?
- In John 20, when the disciples are gathered together in fear, what was the only thing necessary for them to receive the grace that Jesus brought? How does this speak to us today?
- Why was Thomas doubting? What was different about his experience from the rest of the disciples? What was necessary for him to receive the grace to overcome his unbelief?

I. The Church as It is Meant to Be (John 13–17)

A. Jesus' Washing (13:1-16)

- i. Jesus becomes a lowly servant in order to cleanse us.
- ii. Jesus disrobing Himself and then re-clothing Himself is a picture of Him dying and rising. (John 10:17-18)
- iii. But what does any of this have to do with the church?
 - a) We are called to serve one another.
 - b) When we forgive one another, we are washing one another's feet.

iv. 13:34-35

B. Jesus' Teaching (15:1-17)

- i. This is also about cleansing.

ii. This is about being joined to Jesus, but it is equally about being joined to one another.

iii. Jesus lays down His life for His friends, but now those friends are to lay down our lives for each other.

C. Jesus' Prayer (17)

i. Jesus is praying for the church. (17:20)

ii. This prayer is about the church being separated for God's purposes in the world. (17:15-19)

iii. God will reveal Christ to the world through the church as it is brought to complete unity! (17:20-23)

a) The progression from cleansing (13, 15) to sanctifying (17) shows that the unity that Christ has been calling for in the church is connected to God's very purpose for us.

b) Won't we get too inward focused?

The goal of what Jesus is doing and saying *"is to bring the individual farther and farther into community, into some form of love and unity with other people."*¹

¹ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pg. 431.

II. The Church as It Often Is (John 20-21)

A. A Timid Community (20:19-23)

*"Here is one of the sorriest images of the church in the whole New Testament. In fact, it's a picture of the church at its worst...."*²

i. They are together. That's all it took for Jesus to bring them the grace they needed.

ii. Some were missing.

B. An Doubting Community (20:24-29)

i. Absence from the community leads to doubts and unbelief.

ii. The greatest cure for doubt is the presence of Jesus, and Jesus always gathers with the gathered community.

a) All Thomas had to do was be there.

b) When the community gathers we hear the word of Christ.

The gathered church is a community in the Presence of Christ. The presence of Christ is the grace that will transform us from what we are, to what we were meant to be!

² William H. Willimon, *Calling and Character* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2000), pg. 146.