

Relationships: A Glorious Inconvenience

Acts 20:1-16

Intro

- 1990, a young man named Christopher McCandless had just graduated college
 - he sold his possessions and gave away all his savings, threw away his credit cards and all forms of ID, and without telling his family or friends, headed into the wilderness
 - for the next two years he traveled all throughout the US, where he'd occasionally meet a family or make a new friend, worked odd jobs here and there
 - any time he begins to form any real friendship, he moves on, leaving a hurt person or family behind him
 - is too annoyed with society, that he decides where he really needs to go is Alaska
 - there he discovers how cruel even the wild is, and in an attempt to head back home, he realizes he's trapped on the other side of what was once a creek, but is now a raging river
 - he waits out the season, and as he waits he mistakes an edible berry for a poisonous one, gets sick and dies alone in the wilderness
 - as he realizes he is poisoned and dying, he reflects on his life and decisions
 - and he writes "True Happiness is Shared", as he realizes his life decisions, and his so called freedom were far from complete or satisfying
 - I'll confess, I want to be this guy on a weekly basis
 - just the busyness and demands of life
 - the difficulties of relationships and ministry
 - **rather than something to escape from - God has given us relationships as an essential way to sustain us through life and ministry**
 - **the only way to make it - to walk with Jesus, to fulfill the ministries he's called us to, is through the gift of relationships**

****this morning, as we look to these 16 verses in Acts, we notice something stunning:***

- *10 different personal names, 14 different locations*
 - *every single word in this text was breathed by God. not an iota or a dot, that's like not a crossed "t" or a dotted "it" will pass away*
 - *the Holy Spirit led the author Luke to include these 24 different names and places to be listed in these 16 verses*
 - *they are highlighting for us church, at least 4 essential truths to life and ministry:*

1) A relationship with Jesus means relationships with others.

The Foundation

- God is a relationship (God is love)
 - **see this in the Godhead - an eternal relationship**
 - the nature of reality is relationship
 - it was out of an overflow of a loving relationship that God created all things
- **to walk with Jesus is to Walk with PEOPLE.**
- **Paul deeply loved people.**
 - he did ministry with people
 - he loved people
 - “...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well” 1 Thessalonians 2:8
- **Jesus lived this:**
 - he had deep relationships with his 12 disciples, and others such as Lazarus and his sisters
 - Jesus could have had a church of 5,000 and yet he was deeply committed to a few relationships
- **Jesus taught this**
 - “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35
- **Church, we are called to this**
 - “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” 1 John 3:16
 - no such thing as a relationship with Jesus without a relationship with the church
- the “one-anothers”

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2) Relationships are essential for ministry.

- “**He was accompanied** by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus...” vs 4
- “... **we** sailed from Philippi... five days later joined the **others**, where **we** stayed” vs 6
- “**We** went on ahead to the ship... **we** took him aboard... the next day **we** set sail from there...” vs 13-15
 - this was always the pattern of Paul’s ministry
 - this was always the pattern of Jesus’ ministry

• The Foundation of Ministry is Relational

- the greatest act of ministry - the cross - was God restoring a broken relationship
 - sin broke the relationship between humanity and God
 - so God came, and Jesus took the punishment, the breach of relationship upon himself
 - Jesus took this for us, that we could be brought into a relationship with our heavenly Father

• and so it is for our ministry

- ministry is through relationship
- evangelism?
 - relationship with your neighbors & coworkers
- reach the nations?
 - relationships made

• **dagger point: we must not neglect relationships in our attempts to serve Jesus**

- “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can

fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- **Jesus never designed serving him to lead to unhealthy relationships**
- **if in your efforts to serve Jesus in your job, in your family, in the church... there is a trail of broken relationships and burned bridges behind you, you've missed the way of Jesus**

- **Our Closest Relationships Matter Most**

- our closest relationships are a barometer for us
 - part of the qualification of a pastor is that he has a healthy marriage and family
- **our closest relationships are our first line of ministry**
 - get your relationships in order
 - Jesus never wants us to do ministry in a way that sacrifices our closest relationships
- **Jesus never wants us to do ministry at a pace that sacrifices our closest relationships**
 - Jacob & His Family
 - go at the pace of your bride, your children, the slowest in the flock
 - we are not called to speed
 - we are called to one another
 - kids certainly slow things down - exactly as they should

3) Relationships are essential for encouragement.

- “When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, **after encouraging them**, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, **speaking many words of encouragement to the people...**” vs 1-2
- “The people took the young man home alive and were **greatly comforted**” vs 12
- Paul needed encouragement also!
 - “For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn-- conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, **comforted us by the coming of Titus**” 2 Corinthians 7:5-6

- “I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, **after I have enjoyed your company for a while**” Romans 15:24
 - “so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and **in your company be refreshed**” Romans 15:32
- **dagger point: we were not designed to walk with Jesus without the encouragement of one another**
 - life is war, following Jesus is war
 - no one goes to war alone
 - “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- we need relationships with one another to handle trauma and grief
 - we get this strange and even funny story of Eutychus in verses 7-12
 - we see this young man die, at church
 - we see Paul, the leader pray for him and he’s healed
 - we do this for one another church
 - we pray for healing
 - sometimes Jesus says yes, sometimes he says no
- every church deals with death together
 - every church throughout history has dealt with death together
 - we do not mourn as the world mourns
 - we know Jesus is risen, and in him we too will see a resurrection
 - we need one another to remember the promise of the resurrection, that this world is not our home, and to be away from the body is to be with Jesus

4) Relationships are essential for worship.

- “On the first day of the week **we came together to break bread**” vs 7

- **essential to worship for this church was this coming together, this eating, this being in relationship with one another**
 - worship is so much more than a church service, hearing the Bible taught, singing
 - an essential ingredient is this TOGETHER-ness
- **we see here also that in our times of worship - our relationships are more important than Entertainment or Convenience**
 - let's be real, Paul bored a young kid literally to death with his preaching
 - I wouldn't say this is an argument for boring, 10 hour sermons, but it certainly shows you that there will be times when you and your preferences are severely challenged as you are in relationships centered around Jesus
 - **our commitment to one another must be more important than the entertainment value of our gatherings**
 - **Virtual Reality Church**
 - "tired of having to wake up, get dressed, and drive across town just to attend your favorite service? introducing virtual reality church. start by choosing a church building that meets your needs...not a people person? select the introvert experience to completely eliminate the welcome team, meet and greet time, connect cards, and that awkward hold hands with the person next to you that we still do...Next, personalize your morning by choosing the worship experience that you want...custom options even let you tailor the skinny-ness of your worship leader's jeans. Finally, no more having to endure the songs that you don't like. With Virtual Reality church you're in charge. For the sermon, choose the amount of conviction you'd like and we'd select a pastor for you. We'll even let you tailor your sermon topics so you'll never have to attend a vision Sunday, or a sermon series on giving...even connect your social media accounts and we'll post for you. Get credit for being super spiritual all from the comfort of your couch. Finally, an option for people asking the question "how can I make Sunday morning even more about me". Virtual Reality church, the future of church attendance"

**one of the ways we see how relationships are essential for our worship is the New Testament teaching of:*

The Body of Christ

- **"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" 1 Corinthians 12:27**
 - no choice, you are the Body - Christian - you're attached
 - don't have the option to say "I love Jesus, not the church" - you ARE the church
 - don't have the option to say "I love the church, I just don't really go that often" or "I go when I have no other priorities"

- “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching” Hebrews 10:24-25
- don’t have the option to say “I love the church, I just don’t serve it”
 - that’s just not a thing
 - “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms” 1 Peter 4:10
- **as with any body - every part matters**
- **in love - too many of you are not functioning as God made you to function in the church**
 - our church is hurting in too many ways because you are not serving your role as a member in the church
 - you cannot be a member of a body, and say you don’t have a part to play
 - if you are a Christian, you are called to be a viable, serving, engaged member of the Body of Christ
- I can guarantee you Paul didn’t bring the food
 - the Church served and provided for one another
 - for us, a church our size isn’t going to gather for one large meal very often
 - home groups
 - inviting one another over for dinner
 - being a part of one another’s lives
 - checking in with one another

**another way we learn that our relationships are essential for our worship is how Jesus teaches us to approach our drama - our messiness - our issues with one another*

Drama

- 1) First, we must remember that the church, and those we have drama with - are the **Bride of Christ**
 - some of the ways we speak of one another, or other churches
 - would you talk about Jesus’ wife that way?
 - would you talk about Jesus’ wife that way in the presence of Jesus?
 - that’s what we do when we speak ill of another to a Christian brother or sister
- 2) Second, hear the words of Jesus about how essential it is that we deal with our drama with one another when it comes to worship

- “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:22-24
- **dagger point: you cannot worship God and not pursue peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ**
 - **some of us need to hear this this morning**
 - “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” 1 John 4:20

Helps from Jesus

- **The Fuel for reconciliation is God’s mercy to us**
 - **the fuel for our relationship with others is our relationship with God**
 - this is our source, fuel for loving others
 - we’ve been radically forgiven and loved by God
 - we can radically forgive and love others
 - we find our joy and satisfaction from this relationship with God
 - therefore we don’t look to others for that, rather we love others from that
 - **as we come to a relationship with our Father, we are led to restore our other relationships**
 - marriages
 - children
 - parents
 - the deepest and most profound breaking of relationships - with our fathers
 - friends
- ““Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” Matthew 7:3

- “But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” Matthew 6:15
 - the unmerciful servant

Call to Respond

- nothing new today
 - be a doer of the Word
 - not agreement, but obedience
- **who do I need to pursue reconciliation with**
 - name
 - invite you to leave your sacrifice at the altar
 - go outside and leave a voicemail
 - send a text or an email
 - arrange a time to talk
 - may be your greatest and purest act of worship
- **what relationships have I neglected for “ministry”**
 - what relationships are actually my first ministry
 - say sorry to a spouse