**The Helper Creates New Family**

**Acts 2:38-43 (ESV)**

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(Missionary to India)

***38*** *And Peter said to them, “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.* ***39*** *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* ***40*** *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* ***41*** *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.* ***42*** *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* ***43*** *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.*

As we look at Scripture this morning, the one that was read, when we were the last two years evaluating what is happening in India and here because of the pandemic, I think the biggest casualty was broken fellowship and broken relationship. That’s one thing that probably put a smile on Satan’s face is that, “That’s what I’ve been trying from Day One. Look what a master stroke I have this time!”

Let me refresh yourselves. It’s nothing new, nothing amazing, but something that we all need to be reminded about. Remember the story in Genesis chapter 2 when God created Adam. Before that, He had created everything under the sun and gave it to him. He told Adam, “Go for fishing trip. Nobody’s going to bother you. You can fish as long as you want to. Play golf. Do barbecue. Enjoy yourself. Today you can have a cat as a pet. Tomorrow you can have a dog. Do whatever you want to do.” But in the midst of all that, God senses that there was no suitable helper. There was nobody of his kind. He was alone. So God comes with a plan and gives him Eve. It was the start of a marriage and after that, the start of a family. That’s what God said when He made Adam and Eve and He says, “I want to enjoy them. I want them to enjoy me.” And that’s how this picture of heaven spread.

The strange thing is that today, we talk about all the world religions and I often try and take people back to Genesis. I say there was time there was only one God and one man. There was no reason for two faiths. Adam didn’t wake up one morning and say, “Now today, what should I believe in?” He had no other choice. He believed in the God who created him. When Eve was created, she didn’t get up and say, “Out of the nine gender choices nowadays you have to choose, which one should I choose? What am I?” No, “He’s a man. I’m a woman. They are not tough choices.” That’s how it was. But in that perfect environment when sin was not even known, when Adam and Eve were fellowshipping with God every day and enjoying Him, Satan was able to get to the first family and destroy the relationship. Not only did he destroy the first marriage, but can you imagine when they have children, their one son kills the other son when killing had not even been invented? They must have been wondering, “What kind of parents we are. What did we do wrong? How did our kid get an idea that you could kill someone?” Ever since, what God chose to be His choice creation, His ultimate image in the form of human beings, His ultimate celebration of the love and relationship, Satan made a goal. “I want to destroy that. I want to strike that every time.”

God kept working on that. Here’s a family. Here’s a marriage. He created a community. He created a nation. He created nations. He’s trying to work so hard and to people around the world He says, “Stay with me. Let me bless you so that you can enjoy the life that I created for you under me, with me and also with one another.” Satan was equally working harder. It was God’s idea to create us to live in fellowship with one another. It is God’s idea that we were supposed to enjoy one another. But in God’s idea, there was also something very unique. The unique was how differently He created us.

They tell me that there are billions of people around the world. Billions of people came and went. Billions may probably come. But still, they can’t find two people that have identical fingerprints. How many variations can you have? Then we move on to the scan and move to DNA. It’s unbelievable, God’s creativity! But then there are that many reasons for you and I to be different from one another and also to divide from one another, and that’s the advantage that Satan takes. He took it from Genesis. Ever since, He’s been doing that and ever since, God is trying to restore His community. He starts in Genesis. If you read through the pages, come all the way to the book of Hebrews and all through the Scriptures, God has said again and again “together, together, together, together.”

When the Holy Spirit comes, one of the messages that we just read was that God is going to create this new community and give another shot. He says the Holy Spirit will bring you together. The Holy Spirit will help you to fight with Satan so that he will not come and destroy the fellowship and the relationship with one another. So the writer of Hebrews, in chapter 10, a familiar passage that sometimes the pastors misuse to bring people back to church. It says there

**Hebrews 10:24** And let us consider how to stir up one another

Encourage one another. Sometimes also it means to give a little kick to one another.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** …to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

It’s more appropriate to do it than ever before. He says we have gone into this isolation. We are told six feet distance from one another. We’ll make it sixty. Any reason that we can have, whether it’s from politics, whether it’s from medical, whether it’s from social, whether it’s economical, whether it’s theological, anything. Every time we are not together in fellowship and enjoying one another, it is a sweet victory for Satan. That’s not how God intended it to be. God’s desire has always been for His people to enjoy Him and enjoy one another. All through the Scriptures, that was His design.

But then on what basis can we ever come together? What will bring us together? What is the glue that will hold us together? Remember a story. I’ll not turn to that, but if you want to write it down, this is in Luke chapter 10, verse 25 onward. The text says that a smart guy, in fact, he is called an expert in the law. He’s called a lawyer, but he was an expert in the Mosaic Law. He comes to Jesus and he says, “Now, what must I do to inherit eternal life? I want to have salvation.” Jesus sensed who he was. He knows the law. He knows Mosaic writing. so He says to him, “You tell me, how does the law read?” He doesn’t ask for his interpretation. He doesn’t ask for his opinion. He said, “I want you to tell me, how does the law read?” Now, every Jew was to recite the Shema from Deuteronomy chapter 6, every day. So if you ask a Jew to recite something, “What is the greatest commandment?” they will say, “Love your God with all your heart, soul, and mind,” and that’s what it was. Now to show that this man was really expert in the law, he combines the commandment from Deuteronomy and then he picks up one from Leviticus and puts them together. He says, “Well, the greatest is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus said, “Wow! Well then, just go and do it. What’s the big deal? You know it. Just go and do it.”

Now he becomes philosophical. He said, “By the way, who is my neighbor? Can you give me a definition of a neighbor?” Then he’s going to ask, “Can you give me a definition of love? Can you give me a definition of myself? What does loving self mean?” We can make it as complicated as we want to. We can bring in all kinds of variations. But Jesus says you just summed up the entire law. Love your God and love your neighbor. Period. But if you want further explanation on what does loving God mean, Jesus had already answered that before. God has answered that before. He said, “If you’ll love me, you will obey my commandments.”

Nowhere in the Scripture do you find that we are commanded every day I’m supposed to say to God, “I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you.” In fact, God says, “I can figure that out. If you love me, obey my commandments. I got it. I’ve commanded you to love me, but not to say it all the time that you love me. If you obey me, I know that you love me.” Now, how am I supposed to love my neighbor? Again, the answer has been provided. You love them the way you like to be loved or the way you love yourself. It’s as simple as that. In fact, Paul makes it even more simple. If you’ll please turn with me to Romans chapter 13, verses 8 and 9. This is what Paul writes.

**Romans 13:8-9** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

God made it so simple. You say, “Well, I’m not able to read my Bible enough. I really don’t know what else is in the Bible.” Well, God says this entire book is summed up in two things: Love your God and love your neighbor. Period. That’s it. If you want to know the definition of that, God again said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” Do you want a definition of love, how I’m supposed to love somebody else? He said just understand how I love you. We thank Him. We say, “Thank you Lord for choosing to love me. Thank you for making a commitment to love me. Thank you for caring for me and for providing for me,” in all the beautiful language that we use to thank God for His love. John says it is the same definition. Now love one another as you have been loved. It’s as simple as that. But Satan is out there all the time to destroy this fellowship, to destroy this love relationship.

When I was growing up, I was born in Darjeeling, the east part of India. My dad was in the army. We lived all the way in India, but our hometown was a small town in Punjab, near the Pakistan border. It’s where the Sikhism started. So the town is basically half Muslim and half Sikhs. Both of my parents were born on the other side of India, which now we call Pakistan. In 1947, they moved here and we grew up in the town. The town is called actually a village, but they had 20,000 people. In India, that’s still a village. There was no post office, no bank, no police station, hardly any modern things. But both my grandparents lived there. They were very well off. My parents came from a large family, so all our aunts and uncles and relatives from both sides were in the same town. So whenever we came back, my dad brought us home from wherever he was posted, my mom used to make us go and say Hi to all our relatives. It’s just two houses down here, three houses down there, two houses down there, but everything was in the same town. But we could not walk in the village of 20,000 people among anyone who did not know who you were. The moment I went out, they would say, “You’re the army man’s son.” This also got us scared and you couldn’t misbehave because everybody knew you and who you belonged to.

The whole community came together to help one another. If there was a wedding, it was considered a village wedding. If there was a funeral, it was considered a village funeral. Every celebration, every mourning, everything was together. When we were growing up I had Muslim friends. I had Hindu friends. I had Sikh friends. We never ever looked at each other through the eyes of the religion. Something changed just in my own lifetime. But within the family, our extended family, things still stayed. A few years ago, I did a podcast for Dallas Theological Seminary. We were talking about evangelizing the world, sharing the Gospel, and what different new methods we need to use. I said we need to look at another perspective, why the other community is not responding to our Gospel. I brought it out. I said the answer is in Acts 2:42. The hallmark of the Christian faith was supposed to be this.

***42*** *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship,*

In Greek, there are only two things there; practicing your faith and fellowship. Fellowship is further broken down into breaking the bread or having a meal together and praying together. I said what is supposed to be the hallmark of Christian faith is actually practiced much better by other religions, whether it’s Islam, whether it’s Sikhism, whether it’s Hinduism. The way the close-knit community and the families are together, they seem to be enjoying fellowship a lot better. There is no church and state separation in their religion.

In fact, last year Dr. Mike Pompey came to the church in Dallas and he mentioned that as a state representative for the U.S., he said, “One thing that amazed me is when I go to represent on the international stage, I was asked to leave my Christian faith behind. But when I’m dealing with world leaders, they brought their religion on the table. You could not ask a Muslim or a Hindu or a Sikh or even an atheist to leave your faith and your beliefs behind and come as a neutral person.” He said, “No, they brought their faith with them.” He said, “Why would I not take my faith with me?” That’s what his whole message was. We need to take our faith to the marketplace and let people know who you are. On Monday, when I show up at work, they tell me that you can’t talk about your religious faith. No, tell me not to talk about my political alliance. That will be much better. But I should be free to talk about my faith. That is what is the essence. Other communities seem to be enjoying fellowship among themselves and practicing their faith, and we are the ones who are lagging it behind.

When I came to the Lord, I was thrown out of my house, thrown out of my community. I had to leave. I was disowned legally. It took me eight years to reconnect back with the family. When I came to New Delhi, one of the things I was looking for was this beautiful description of Christian community, the church. But what I ran into was that the churches wanted to have nothing to do with me because they first wanted to know who led me to the Lord. What was the theological affiliation of the pastor who gave me baptism? Where is my baptism certificate? Which church issued it? And then all kinds of other conditions. One church said you cannot have a beard and come to the church because a beard is a sign of rebellion. I said I grew up as a Sikh. I trimmed my hair. I trimmed my beard. I don’t know what shaving is. I’ve never shaved it.

When I ran into those denominations and all kinds of other hang-ups that we have, I said, when we were Sikhs, we were Sikhs. So when we are Christians, aren’t we just supposed to be Christians? No. Satan has done a wonderful job and given us thousands of reasons to divide us. He said, “Let me tell you. That person has a different color. They have a different ethnical background. Theologically they don’t believe in what you believe. They need to have a better new identity, gender-wise, and this and that and all of that. We have no idea what our kids are going through. Akanksha had to fill out an application for college and that college gave nine categories to select a gender. Nine categories! What a nonsense it is! God said just two things. Love your God, which is obey the Bible, obey the commandments. And love one another, because that is going to be the essence of this new community that the Holy Spirit has created.

The last thing I’d like to share is that the bond of this new community is stronger than the blood relatives that you and I have. The reason is because that’s what Jesus Christ did. It is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that binds us together for eternity. So if you’re looking for a legal blood relative, you’re sitting right next to each other. In heaven, my wife and I will not be husband and wife, but we will still be there together as part of God’s family, individually, because that bond is going to last for eternity. For some reason, we are going to retain our identity. We are going to be able to recognize one another. You and I will not be able to go to heaven and ask God, “So which part of heaven am I going to get, because I heard that mansions on the north side overlooking the lake are much better than the ones on the south or the west?” (Laughter!) Can you imagine asking God, “First tell me, who is going to be my roommate?” All those things are going to disappear when we are there.

Just have a little glimpse of heaven and suddenly, the whole thing that we do over here is so silly. It’s so ridiculous. It makes no sense. But still, we believe in it. We practice it. We have bought into the lies given to us by our government, by our science, by our medical world, by our denominations, you name it. Only one person is smiling through the whole thing, and that is Satan. In this last two years of pandemic, we don’t know how long it’s going to last, he is smiling. I have been saying so many times, we were worried about the nuclear war and here, a common cold brought the world to its needs and shut us in.

It’s as simple as it can be. Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. Loving Him means obeying His commandments. And love one another as you love yourself, because that’s what God’s design was when He created us. He started a family, started a community, started a nation, started a world. And He says, “I would love to see a lot more people in heaven.” But then He also said, “Enjoy each other.” Enjoy the Lord and enjoy one another. In fact, when He gave the definition out to His disciples that how will people know that you are my disciples? He said if you have love for one another, they’ll figure it out. They will want to be part of the community.

So many times, I’ve heard the testimonies of how many people came to the Lord because some family cared for them. Some family showed the love. Someone invited them to church. Some church cared for them. That’s what the world is waiting for. They’ve heard the Gospel that Jesus loves and Jesus forgives and Jesus wants them in heaven. Now what they want to see is whether you and I love them or not, whether we want them in our home or not, and whether we are willing to forgive and put up with them or not. That’s what they want to see.

I met a number of international students who often say that “I’ve been in the U.S. for twenty years” after being a student and working and everything, “and never stepped my foot in any Christian American home.” What a shame it is! The hallmark of us Christians is practicing the Bible by loving God and fellowship. Fellowship is as simple as having a meal together and praying together. There’s no better form of fellowship. Husband and wife holding their hands together and praying. Kids coming together in the family and praying. Church group coming together and praying. There’s no better fellowship than that fellowship.

Something a meal does…Pastor Steve has been working hard to assign us to different places so we can have breakfasts, lunches and dinner. The first day, we kind of overdid it. Every meal, we ate so much that we said, I’m never going to eat in life again, and then we were hungry again. So we have enjoyed the time with people that we have met. It’s a wonderful time of fellowship. There is a bonding that happens. Isn’t that true, Linda? Yesterday, we met a nice couple-to-be; Bekah and her to be a husband soon, Brad. Is that right? Bryan? Sorry! They’re here. I don’t want to mispronounce the name. Young couple and such a beautiful time. I said thank you for signing up for old people. They said, “No, we heard that, we loved it, we wanted to do that.” It was such a blessing to be together. Steve says there are a couple more slots empty. I said that’s fine, but don’t force us upon people. But there is something that happens.

When I was growing up, as a family, we always ate together. That was the practice. There was no such thing as tv dinners or going somewhere else. We as a family, when we are together, we all the time when we are not at somebody’s house, we like to have dinner together, sit together, have breakfast together. My wife and I eat together. Part of it was my great-grandfather was actually Muslim and came from Iran. My grandfather was born in Afghanistan, and moved there. There was a proverb that he used to say to us anytime we wanted to eat on our own. The problem actually is the ultimate curse that you can put on someone and it’s still used in the Middle East. The curse is, “May you eat alone.” It means you have no family, no friends, nobody to care, and you’re eating your food alone. In fact, the Muslim world takes it so seriously that not only will they eat together, but they’ll eat from the same plate and the same pot because they don’t want to be under that curse, “May you eat alone.” That’s what is supposed to be the ultimate fellowship.

Something happens, a bonding happens when you share a meal together. It doesn’t have to be anything elaborate. You come together as a family or come together as friends. Make pizza, bring the sandwiches that Pastor Steve brought, and just enjoy one another, and you will know the whole law. The entire Bible is summed up in two things. Love the Lord and love one another. After hearing all that, it doesn’t matter how many sermons you’ve heard in twenty-eight years of Pastor Ritch who has preached over here. Jesus said it’s summed up in this one thing. Just go and do it. Love the Lord and love one another. Isn’t that simple? Our problem is not that we need to know more. Our problem is just to go out and do it.