



“The Importance of Community Among Believers” John 12:1-11

Introduction

We spent the last five weeks preaching through **John 11**.

As we walked through **John 11** we learned about the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

In the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead we discovered:

- The Significance of Friendship**
- The Significance of Suffering**
- The Significance of Courage**
- The Significance of Grief**
- The Significance of Miracles**

Today we continue our study of the book of **John** by examining **John 12**.

Please turn in your Bibles to **John 12:1-11**

Scripture

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead.

²So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him.

³Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus’s feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray him), said,

⁵ “Why wasn’t this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

⁶ He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

⁷ Jesus answered, “Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial.

⁸ For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

⁹ Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one he had raised from the dead.

¹⁰ But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also,

¹¹ because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus. CSB

Quote Of The Day

“Community is first of all a quality of the heart. It grows from the spiritual knowledge that we are alive not for ourselves but for one another. Community is the fruit of our capacity to make the interests of others more important than our own.”

— Henri Nouwen

“The dynamic of friendship is almost always underestimated as a constant force in human life: a diminishing circle of friends is the first terrible diagnostic of a life in deep trouble: of overwork, of too much emphasis on a professional identity, of forgetting who will be there when our armored personalities run into the inevitable natural disasters and vulnerabilities found in even the most average existence.” — David Whyt

As we begin our study of **John 12** we need to understand the context.

John chapters 1–11 describe the ministry of Jesus.

John chapters 12–21 describe that last week of the life of Jesus including his death, burial and resurrection.

John 12 is divided into five sections.

The Importance of Community Among Believers vv.1-11

The Triumphal Entry of Jesus vv.12-19

The Hour Has Come For Jesus to be Glorified vv.20-36

The Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled in Jesus vv.37-43

The Purpose and Mission of Jesus Revealed vv.44-49

It was six days before the Passover and Jesus was in Bethany with Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Simon the Leper and His disciples.

In other words, this was the first day of the last week of Jesus on the earth.

They were at the home of Simon the Leper— **Matthew 26:6-13** and **Mark 14:3-9**.

Many Scholars believe Simon was the Leper healed by Jesus in **Matthew 8:1-5**

John 12 is divided into five sections.

The Importance of Community Among Believers vv.1-11

What is community among believers?

Community among believers is doing life together in a way that reflects our commitment to Christ and our love for each other.

Community among believers is consistent and authentic fellowship with other believers. Community among believers is where we develop relationships with other believers to refine our lives and intentions, so they more consistently align with Christ.

John 12:1-11 reveals six attributes of biblical community among believers.

Six Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

Purpose

Service

Fellowship

Worship

Accountability

Peace

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

1. Purpose vv.1-2a

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. ²So they gave a dinner for him there; CSB

The purpose of Biblical Community among believers is to Celebrate Jesus and each other, we encourage each other and enjoy each others company.

Biblical Community among believers is a place where we laugh out loud, we cry, we share our stories, we share our burdens, we share our blessings, we pray, we grow together in faith, courage, unity and commitment to Christ.

In this passage of Scripture, this small gathering of people was the last moment of rest and relaxation for Jesus before He was betrayed, falsely accused, arrested, tried in a sham trial, beaten, mocked and ultimately crucified.

Life can be very difficult. Meaningful times of biblical community with other believers give us comfort in the midst of all the chaos.

We do not need the whole world to know our name, but when a small group of people in biblical community know us, care for us, talk with us and share life together— life is much better!

We are not made to do life alone!

"There can be no maturity in the spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life, apart from an immersion in, and embrace of, community. I am not myself by myself." — Eugene Peterson

Years ago, when speaker of the house Sam Rayburn heard he had terminal cancer, he shocked everyone when he announced he was going back to his small town in Bonham, Texas. People said to him: "They have got the finest facilities in Washington, D. C. Why go back to that little town?" Rayburn's response speaks to the priceless importance of community. He said, "Because in Bonham, Texas, they know if you're sick, and they care when you die."

Citation: J. R. Love, Rushton, Louisiana Andy Crouch writes in an article titled "Teaching People to Flourish":

Biblical Community among believers has Purpose.

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

2. Service v.2b

²So they gave a dinner for Him there; **Martha was serving them**, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. CSB

The word translated “**servicing**” comes from the Greek word “**Diakeneo**” which means to serve with a humble spirit and pure motives.

Martha was known as a person who had a servant’s heart.

Biblical Community among believers creates opportunities to serve and care for each other.

Serving others means giving to others with no expectation of anything in return. Fulfillment, calm, security, peace of mind, confidence, all come from a willingness to serve others. When we serve others we find peace, satisfaction, fulfillment and joy.

Biblical Community among believers happens when we Serve others.

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

3. Fellowship v.2c

²So they gave a dinner for him there; Martha was serving them, and **Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with him.** CSB

The word translated “**reclining**” comes from the Greek word “**Anakamai**” meaning to dine, to entertain others in a casual and comfortable setting.

In first century Jewish culture it was customary to share meals together with family and friends.

There were three categories of meals:

Ordinary meals—

Ordinary meals happened twice a day. A small meal in the morning and the main meal early in the evening.

The meal described in **John 12** was an ordinary/ casual meal in the evening with a special purpose—To celebrate Jesus, to eat a meal together, to hang out and enjoy each others company.

Festive meals—

Meals specifically for celebrating Jewish festivals

Sacred meals—

Special meals prepared for special or significant events.

An example would be a **meal of condolence** prepared for someone who has experienced extreme adversity such as the death of a loved one.

Jewish tradition recognizes a meal as a time for intimacy, fellowship, and significant conversation. Kindness is the basic mood of the Jewish meal. People are fed and nourished, and in this intimate setting people talk with each other about what matters.

Creating community through meals is significant in our lives as well.

I first experienced the significance of community when I was in the Air Force.

My experience in the Air Force helped me understand the importance for community among believers.

Shared meals express hospitality, affirm the value of meaningful relationships, friendship and good will.

I can only imagine the conversation between Lazarus, Simon the leper, and Jesus!

Biblical Community among believers happens when we fellowship with others.

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

4. Worship v.3

Then Mary took a pound of perfume, pure and expensive nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. CSB

Authentic worship doesn't just happen on Sunday.

Authentic moments of worship happen anytime we seek to recognize, honor and worship Jesus.

During this special meal for Jesus, Mary of Bethany took a pound of expensive perfume washed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair.

What a picture of humility and authentic worship.

Don't miss the significance of this moment.

The room was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Anytime anyone in that room ever smelled that fragrance again, they would remember that powerful moment of worship with Jesus!

Remember this— We only have so much time on the earth, recognize the blessings of God and worship Him!

Worship God in the moment!

Psalm 145:1-3 ¹I exalt you, my God the King, and bless your name forever and ever. ²I will bless you every day; I will praise your name forever and ever. ³The Lord is great and is highly praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

I wrote a song in an authentic moment of worship!

Biblical Community among believers happens when we worship together.

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

5. Accountability vv.4-8

Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray him), said, ⁵“Why wasn’t this perfume sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” ⁶He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it. ⁷Jesus answered, “Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of my burial. ⁸For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” CSB

Jesus took this moment to teach a biblical principle.

Serve and worship Jesus NOW!

Questions can make hermits out of us, driving us into hiding. Yet the cave has no answers. Christ distributes courage through community; he dissipates doubts through fellowship. He never deposits all knowledge in one person but distributes pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to many. When you interlock your understanding with mine, and we share our discoveries, when we mix, mingle, confess and pray, Christ speaks.

Citation: Max Lucado, *Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear* (Thomas Nelson, 2009), p. 144

Attributes of Biblical Community Among Believers:

6. Peace vv.9-11

Then a large crowd of the Jews learned he was there. They came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, the one he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰But the chief priests had decided to kill Lazarus also, ¹¹because he

was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus. CSB

Jesus was about to enter the last week of His life on the earth.

His life was about to change, He was about to enter the most challenging, grueling, heart wrenching, horrific, yet most powerful week in the history of the world.

The world we live in is harsh and at times very cruel— biblical community among believers brings peace, courage, strength and hope for the world we live in!

What does community among believers really look like?

Kennon L. Callahan in his book, **Twelve Keys To An Effective Church**, writes:

Strong healthy congregations seek to create significant relational groupings that are inviting, warm, friendly and relational.

The search for community is the search for roots, place, and belonging which means finding a grouping of people in which in-depth, significant relationships of sharing and caring take place. We are who we are as a result of the groupings that have informed and enriched our own sense of individuality, of meaning and purpose in life, and of hope for the future. Most people engage in a persistent search for the depth of community that will enrich their lives and enable them to discover and fulfill their life search.

People are not searching for programs and activities or institutional structures, but for events of compassion, for events of mission, and for experiences of hope in which they can share. They are searching for people with whom they can live out life together. People long for people more than programs.

People search for community, not for committees. People will put up with being on committees to the extent that they have discovered a depth of community. Frequently, the liveliest times are before and after a committee

meeting. People laugh and carry on, stand around and share with one another the sense of community.