August 29/30, 2020

The Good and Pleasant Community

Psalm 133

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Good morning, Church. Two weeks from today, we are really looking forward to resuming our study in the Gospel of John that we took a pause from over the course of the summer, so we could talk a bit about a vision for the future. Before we start that study, though, we thought it would be good to take two weeks—this weekend and next—and talk about the value of community, something we value as a church, and really just something that we value as believers. So, in order to do that this morning, I want to ask you for a moment to think about your life. As you look at your life, who are those people or that group of people that you have, that you can have deep spiritual conversations with? Does that group exist? That group with whom you can talk about what God says in His Word, the way that Word impacts you, and the way you work that out day to day? I'd call that *Biblical Community*. The question is, "Are you experiencing that in your life?" And if not, why is that? Why is that something that is maybe missing? So often in my life, what I find is, there are things that I profess to be important. I say, "Oh, yeah, it's really important!" But maybe I don't necessarily take the steps to make that thing a reality in my life. Exercise is that way, right? I bet there are a few gym memberships in this room that haven't been used in a while. They're things that we know are good, but we struggle to enact. And I think in our culture, it's especially easy to do this with community, because I think our culture works against this value. I think our culture is one that really values and glorifies the independent person—the "Lone Ranger"—the person that needs no one. But it's not only that. We live in a culture of distraction, and there are a number of distractions in our life that maybe cloud out for us this feeling we have, this sense we have that we need others, that we need community. Who needs people, right? If I have my phone and I have virtual people on Facebook…that could be the way we start to think. And yet here we are—your church, your pastors—continuing to bring up this value of community. We took two weeks to talk about it this summer and here we are again. And maybe you're sitting there thinking, "I know it's important, but I just don't have the time. I just don't have the energy. I just don't have the room in my life for community." So the question I want to ask this morning is, "*Is it really that important?*" Is community necessary in the Christian life, or is it possible to move forward in the Christian walk and do that as a solo pursuit?

So that's what we're going to talk about this morning. In order to do that, we're going to look at a couple of different passages. We're going to start in Psalm 133. So we want to talk about this value of community, but also talk about, if it's so valuable, how do we start to engage in it? And before we begin, a little bit of a confession. I always think some of the best sermons are the ones that you have to preach to yourself. And this is one of those, because I'm a pretty independent person. I struggle with wanting to reach out to others; I'm kind of an introvert, right? You give me a cup of coffee and a book and I'm good for about half a year, right? My wife likes to make fun of me because in high school, my consideration of a great night wasn't if I got together with friends or went to a party or something like that. It was if I could go to Blockbuster and get a movie, have a pizza, and sit there alone with no one else. She likes to tease me about how I was a little lame when I was in high school, but that's who I was. And yet I open God's Word, and I come across a psalm like this one. It's the Psalm of David, Psalm 133, verse 1:

How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!

Of all the things that David could write a psalm about, of all the things that could prompt him to praise, of all the things that he could name and worship God for—all the character qualities that he had seen God exhibit—all the history of miracles that had occurred in the history of God's walking with His people, Israel, of all the things he could name, he says, **How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.** I find that to be remarkable, that he takes a moment and uses this psalm as an opportunity to praise God for what he sees when he sees community among God's people. He said, "It's **good**!

Maybe that word takes you back to Genesis 1 where God is creating, and after each moment of creation, He looks and says, *"It is good*." It's the same word. It goes on and on, "It's good…it's good," and then He says, "It's *very good,"* when He creates man and woman. Interestingly, God says, "It's *not good* (same word) that man is alone, and so He creates Eve. This *good* isn't some kind of subjective word that sometimes we use to describe things. This is, in the biblical sense, the Hebrew word **good** is describing an *objective reality*, kind of describing, "This is the way things are supposed to be. This is the order that things are supposed to exist in." It's good. It's just right. It's just the way it's supposed to be. It's the way things were designed. So when David said, it's **good**, it's exactly according to the design when God's people live together in unity. Then he said it's **pleasant**. Pleasant could be translated as *beautiful* or *lovely* or *sweet*. It's a sweet, lovely, wonderful thing when God's people live together in unity. As you drove up to church this morning, how many people said, "Ah, it's good and pleasant…good and pleasant!" Better yet, this summer, if you participated in online connect groups, how many of you logged into that wonderful application *Zoom* that we've all become so familiar with and said, "Oh, how good and pleasant to login to Zoom." But Scripture tells us it's good and pleasant—it's just right—when God's people **live together in unity**.

So, if that is not my experience, a question that I have to ask myself is, "What am I missing?" See, so often I think I start to qualify community and I start to think to myself, "My community would be good and pleasant if just a few different people were in it." Do you ever feel that way? Maybe the people sitting next to me, "If I could just swap a few of them out, then I would say it would be good and pleasant." We like to qualify what makes a community good, but David only gives us one qualifier. Here's the qualifier: **God's people.** *When God's people dwell together, it is good, it is pleasant.* So what am I missing if I live in isolation, if I'm neglecting the coming together with other believers? Well, what I'm missing apparently is something incredibly good, incredibly pleasant, something that is the way things are supposed to be, right? Now as the psalm continues, the imagery gets a little archaic, so we're gonna have to kind of translate what this means, right? If you have a beard, I might be about to show you your life verse. So as the psalm continues in verse 2, you'll see what I mean. *When God's people come together…*

It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard, (there it is, fellas)
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore. (Vs. 2-3)

So my challenge here to you is that the next time you have a sweet time of fellowship with some Christian friends, I want you to end the night by saying, "You know, this evening, *it was like oil being poured on the head and running down the beard."* What is David saying here? He's using two images: oil and dew. The oil is clearly trying to point us towards this moment, this enactment of an anointing, right? Aaron was the chief priest of Israel, and when Aaron, the priests—anyone really—was anointed with oil, oil was poured on them, and it essentially was a vote of confidence from God. It was a representation of God's choice of that person, God's blessing upon that person. God choosing that person sometimes is signified as God pouring His Spirit out upon that person. This is an objectively good and blessed thing, this anointing. And so, as David's talking about community, he's saying it's like this moment of anointing; it's *that good*! Then he says it's like *dew on Mount Hermon*. I've been to Israel. It is a hot, sun scorched, parched land. When I was in Galilee, I remember thinking to myself, "I have never been hotter in my entire life than I am right now." And in an environment like that, in a wilderness like that, in a dry, and a weary land, the places where dew would fall, where mist would fall, where there would be irrigation, that was a particularly blessed spot. That was a treasure in the middle of the desert. And that's what Mount Hermon was, and of course dew falling on Mount Zion—that's God's mountain—that's a good thing that signifies goodness and blessedness, being chosen by God. So David's using these images just to tell us, "This is how good community is!"

So how would we do this in our modern-day telling? What would the psalm say if we were writing it? Maybe we'd say, "When God's people live together in unity, it is like a big glass of ice water on a hot, humid, windy, Nebraska day, as only Nebraska can be, right, be humid and windy? Or maybe we'd say, "Because we're all mourning the loss of football" (Tim talked about it last week) maybe we'd say, "It's like a hot Runza on a cold Saturday afternoon, or Valentino's, if you so prefer." Maybe we'd say, "It's like at a wedding when there's a blessing given to a bride and groom," or when we give a toast and we just honor someone. That's a good moment. That's a good thing. David tells us—Scripture tells us—that when God's people come together in unity, it is a good and a pleasant thing.

So as we continue, my question is, "What is it that happens in community that makes it so good and so pleasant, something that is so right, something we're wired for, and we need?" Because the truth is, we all gather in lots of different settings, don't we? We have groups of friends; we have hobbies. Some people align according to a political platform, which is everywhere right now. You have golf groups, work groups. There are all types of gatherings, but what Scripture is telling us is there is something unique about God's people coming together. There's a uniqueness to Christian community.

So, we need to talk about what that is. Of course we could go on and on, but I want to highlight three things for you that I think are found *only* in Christian community. Of all the communities we can gather in, there's only one place where we can find these things. The first thing that I'd love to highlight for you is that Christian community is the only community on Earth that is to be marked by *God's love.* It's the only place where you will find that. Listen with me to Jesus' words here in John 13.

> **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.** (*ESV, John 13:34-35)

The end towards which Christian community is aimed is *love*. It said we would develop to be a loving community, and that love would be God's kind of love; that would be selfless love. Often we have to unpack here what we mean by love, because we have to say this doesn't mean *strong feelings.* It doesn't mean *liking something a whole lot*. It doesn't mean a really *strong desire*. In the biblical sense**,** love means *choosing what is good for another person***.** When God loves us, He chooses what is good

for us, He seeks it! He seeks to bring it about and that's what we are seeking after in our Christian community, that *that* kind of love would exist among us. Now, there's no other community where that is even remotely possible. That's only possible in Christian community because Christian community is the only place where you have people gathered together who have been redeemed by God, people in whom He has poured His very Spirit. He's given us new hearts, transformed hearts, regenerated hearts, hearts that are capable of growing in Christ's likeness and starting to embody the very love that God pours into us. That can happen nowhere else. Only within Christian community can that be experienced. In church, brothers and sisters, we long for that; we were made for that, for a community sufficient for the toxicity that we are living in these days. There's only one place it can be found; that is within the Christian community.

The second thing we could say about Christian community is it's the only community that is defined by *the hearing of God's Word*. There's no other community where that's present. Listen to Paul's words here in Colossians 3:16. Paul says:

> **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.** (*ESV)

I don't think as Paul was writing this small group of believers in Colossae—probably 10 to 20 believers—I don't think he was thinking, "Hey, you just need to only speak verses of psalms," I don't think that's what he is intending to convey. I think the image is this: As God's people gather together, we're to be a Word-saturated people. We're to be a praise-filled people. We're to be a thankfulness-is-abounding kind of people, and then, as we gather, all of these things that we saturate ourselves in, start to pervade and mark our community. We become a teaching and instructing in the Truth-of-God's-Word kind of community. When we speak to one another, we're speaking the Word of God to one another. We're instructing in the truth, and so when we gather on Saturday or on Sunday, and we hear someone preach and open up the Word, that's a good thing. But we also go and we gather in other communities, and we hear the Word spoken. We need that. The only place that happens is Christian community.

There's a theologian, a pastor named Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a martyr that died during World War II in Nazi Germany; he died in prison. If you've never heard of him, I encourage you to look into his life, just an incredible person of faith. But he wrote this little book called *Life Together* and it's just a short reflection on community. And in there he says this. He says, "Therefore Christians need other Christians who speak God's Word to them. They need them again and again when they become uncertain and disheartened, because living by their own resources, they cannot help themselves without cheating themselves out of the truth. They need other Christians as bearers, and proclaimers of the Divine Word of salvation." What he's saying is that when my heart is uncertain, when I'm left alone to myself—and we all know what happens—I start to hear lies. I start to believe those lies, and the role of community is that other brothers and sisters, other Christians, come and they speak the Word of God to me and as they do that, it's a balm for me. It corrects my thinking; it aligns me with the truth, and we need to be people, and we need to be around people that are speaking the Word of the gospel of salvation to one another. If I'm neglecting Christian community, I'm missing out on that incredible experience.

Third, and finally, there's no other community on earth where God intends to *display the fullness and the brilliance of Jesus*, than in Christian community. Listen to Romans 12, verses 4 and 5:

> **For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** (*ESV)

All of us in this room that are followers of Jesus, we are *parts of the body of Christ*. God has gifted us in particular ways. He has worked in our life in particular ways. And as we come together, we make up the body of Christ—all of the parts working together. But if I'm neglecting Christian community, I'm essentially starting to see and starting to kind of only have in my view, a segment of that body. I'm starting to see just, kind of, one little part of the body if I start to only be with people that are just like myself. But when we gather together in the body of Christ, we start to see ways that Jesus is displaying His goodness, His magnificence in other people, in ways that He doesn't necessarily do that in my own life. When I'm with other Christians, and I see giftedness in them, I'm not stirred up to envy or jealousy. I'm stirred up to praise and worship because I say, "Look how amazing Jesus is that He's gifted this person that way." And I see Jesus manifesting Himself in that person in a different way than He does in my life. And that's just the way God intends it to be, that when we come together, it's not just the hands getting together and sitting together (if we're using this metaphor of body) or the noses. You guys can be the noses (I'm sorry.) No, we want to see the fullness; we want to see the fullness of the body. We want to see the fullness of the way that God is choosing today to manifest Jesus' presence in the world. If we live in isolation, if we neglect gathering together and we neglect community, then we're missing out on that wonderful experience that prompts us to worship. It makes our vision and our view of Jesus that much bigger, that much more expansive.

So how do I sum all this up? Well, I'd say this. I'd say that community is the place, ultimately, that God intends for us to grow. All of these things that we've talked about are all ways that we essentially are prompted to grow. We become people that are more pervaded by God's love. We speak the Word of God to one another, and we see the body working together. These are all ways that God uses community to help us grow to become more like Him. Or taking it back to the vision that we talked about this summer, God wants to use community to help us know Jesus, to help us become more like Him, and (ultimately then, to challenge us through community) to help others do the same, to reach out to a world that needs to experience this type of community. So, I come back to that original question. Who are the people in your life that speak the Word of God to you? Do you have a group of people that challenge you, that you can engage in spiritual conversations with? Do you have people with whom you would say, "This is my community; I'm experiencing community with these people!"

Now what follows is: I want to talk a little bit about how we intend, as a church, to move towards that. It's real easy to get up here and talk about it and then say, "Now go figure it out. Okay, guys, it's really important! Go figure it out!" But our job, our mandate as a church is to try to create contexts that are ripe for growth. That's just what we want to do as a church. All of you are familiar with the mission of Lincoln Berean Church. This is what we are about. This is who we have been; this is who we are, and this is who we will continue to be. We say the mission of Lincoln Berean church is: **To glorify God, by seeking to present every person complete in Christ.** That's who we are. We want to be people that are reaching out to every person, that they might come into this relationship with God, that they might grow in maturity, and they'll become **complete in Christ**. Then this summer, Josh and Jeff and I had the privilege of unpacking a vision statement for our church. Who do we want to be? Where are we going, and we called it RE**NEW**ED, because, again, it's fresh language on an expression of who we have always been as a church and we've said this was our vision: **We want to be a people coming together, to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same**. It's who we want to be. That's the mission; that's the vision.

But the question I want to turn to with the time that remains this morning is, "What's our strategy? What's the plan? How are we going to move forward to accomplish that mission, that vision?" And I've got to be honest, these are strange days, aren't they? If you've started school again, you know, everything's odd. Even looking around this room with two seats between people, a number of people still engaging at home because that's where they're most comfortable, we're living in odd days, and we all long for this to come to an end. But the reality is, we're just not there yet. And as we start to think about the fall, we know that things are going to look different. And so we wanted to take a few minutes to talk about that. Normally, it's right around this time that we pass out what we call *The Atlas*. And in The Atlas, you may remember it, there are pages and pages of ways to connect and places to serve and programs that are offered, and classes that are offered. And we didn't hand that out this year, because the truth is, this fall is going to look different for us as a church. On Sundays, on Wednesdays, we made the decision that we can't offer classes right now. And on Wednesday nights, there's not going to be kids' programming, and that's a major change for us, just because of the circumstances we find ourselves in. And I can tell you, that pains no one more than me. I love teaching classes. I don't know if they're any good, but I keep teaching them! I like teaching them. But this fall is just going to be different. The one thing we want to remind ourselves is that even though the vessel is changing—or has to change during this time—the treasure is the same, right? The treasure is Christ, and we as a church are going to keep pressing forward and figuring out how do we pivot; how do we adapt during this time to continue to accomplish what God has called us to accomplish, even though things can't look quite the same? So we wanted to highlight three things that we as a staff, we as a leadership team, have said, "These have to be the things we place our emphasis on during this time in order to help us continue to move forward."

The first is what we're doing right now. It's our *weekend gatherings*, our corporate gatherings. We want to be a people that are coming together, and this is a major expression of that. This is a place where we come; we sit under the teaching of the Word of God; we come together and offer up our praises to God. We are so thankful that we have been able to resume that, and we are going to continue to do everything we can to make this something that is a good expression of worship, of a gathering that is glorifying to God and that is encouraging to us. And if you're staying at home right now, you're still engaging online; we're going to continue to emphasize that. We know that there's something that is so good about being together, and even though we're thankful that even when we couldn't gather, we could engage online, we just have to be honest; it's not the same is it? But for some people, it's necessary still, and so that's why we're going to continue to emphasize it. But a podcast, as good as that is—I like those things—but that's not church. It's not gathering together with the saints. We need to be people that are coming together, that are hearing other believers sing their praises to God. I'm encouraged by that and interacting, asking people how it's going—even though we don't shake hands, right, we can still give air-high-fives or something, being with the saints, being the church together. And so our weekend services are going to be a point of emphasis as we move forward throughout the fall. We're so thankful that the last couple of weeks, our youth and our kids' programming has been able to begin to function again—over 200 kids—and I think 270 youth on a Wednesday night coming together! And that is so important. This isolation has been so hard on our kids and on our youth. And so we're so excited that we can do that again. And one of the things that our weekend services allow for, is for all of us to find ways to be engaged in serving with kids and with youth especially. I know that kids' ministry would love for you to consider and pray about how you can engage. Same thing with youth ministry, how you could engage, how you could serve. You could be a table leader; you could be a small group host, so that you could be engaged in the process of helping our kids and our youth catch a vision for who God is and step into this process of becoming more like Him. So that's our first emphasis.

The second is our *care and our support ministries*. We know that that has to be something we emphasize during this time, and so our care and our support ministries need to be able to operate freely because this has been a traumatic time for a number of people. As I look at statistics, I just saw the other day that 25% of young adults have considered harming themself in ways they never had before. That's part of the isolation of this time, I saw 40% of American adults, just in the workforce, would say that mentally they're in a much worse place today than they were just six months ago. And of course, that's true, right? When all of life comes to a halt and we all have to get isolated, of course that's going to have an effect. And that's precisely why our support and our care ministries have to be able to function. And so our support groups, our recovery groups—Celebrate Recovery, Spiritual Care, Prayer Ministry, Counseling Ministries, Pastoral Counseling—all of that is up and running. And if that is something that you find yourself struggling with, we want you to know we're moving forward with that. This is not a point where the church can step to the sidelines. We have to be engaged in that battle with and for people, and so that is going to be a point of emphasis as we move into the fall.

The last thing that we're going to focus on—we're going to emphasize—relates to what we talked about today. If community is so critical, if we, with David, are saying **it is good and pleasant when God's people live together in unity**, if we are going to say to you that, "Hey, there is nothing like Christian community," then we want to do everything possible to help as many people as possible experience that reality, experience life in community. So this fall, we are going to relaunch something that we've done and emphasized in the past—and it still exists to an extent—but we want to put a new focus on it, and that is life groups. We're calling them *Life Groups:Renewed,* because we're not very creative. *(laughter)* We thought that has so much continuity with what we've talked about this summer, because this has never been something that's gone away. But we do want to emphasize it in a new way. Life groups are essentially a place where you can gather with other believers to have a conversation about how you take what you heard on Sunday, and start to talk about what that means on a Monday, on a Tuesday, on a Wednesday. That's all Life Groups are. But they're going to have a little bit of a new format. We're going to talk about that in just a minute.

Before I get to that though, I want to talk about the timeline for these life groups. Over this past week and over the week to come, we're trying to populate as many of these groups with leaders as we possibly can. And so that's what we've been doing. And that's what we'll continue to do for the coming week. One week from today, however, those groups are going to open up, and we would just encourage all of you to pray that if community is something that you feel like you're not experiencing, we want to encourage you to pray about getting engaged in a Life Group. Those will open up next week, and for a week there will be an opportunity to sign up and join those groups. And then on September 13, when we resume the John study, those groups will begin to meet again. So that's kind of the timeline. I want to talk about some of the details of how these are going to look a little different than life groups in the past. They're *Life Groups:Renewed,* so I want to talk about five distinctive features of these groups.

First thing is that these groups are going to be **Sermon Based**. So basically we come together every weekend; we hear the common preaching of the Word, and we're saying, "You know, there's so much good material." You could study a different book of the Bible. You could take a life group study. You could take a small-group-study; you could read a different book together, but we thought, you know, we want to simplify it. A unifying thing for us is that we come together and we hear the teaching together. And we just want to be people that don't just hear that teaching, and then move on and forget all about it, right? None of us want it to be that. And so we said, "Let's have these groups be sermon based, so that when we come together, what we're doing together is talking about: "How do we apply this? What did that mean? What's that look like in my workplace? What's that look like in my

neighborhood, in my family?" So, the first thing about these groups is they're going to be *sermon based*, and we'll all rally around the sermon together, and then figure out together, "How do we apply that?"

The second thing that is going to be different about these groups, and this is a pretty big departure from the past is that they're going to be 10 weeks long, so they'll have a **10 week session**. The first session starts September 13, and it will run through to right around Thanksgiving, and then they'll pause. Now that's a little different than it was in the past because it used to be life groups just met on and on and on. But we feel like, with the way life works these days, it's important to have a rhythm. It's important to take breaks, where we can all kind of rejuvenate a little bit, and assess, "Is that the best thing for me right now?" "Should I be in a different group?" "Should I launch my own group?" And so these groups are going to continue on together for 10 weeks straight and then there'll be a pause. And then in January a new session will begin that will last 10 weeks again.

And the thing that we think that provides for is—the third feature—it provides **on-ramps and off-ramps**. When I used to be a pastor, and we oversaw life groups back in about 2008, I remember I always felt so guilty because I had this stack of cards on my desk of people who wanted to be in life groups, but we couldn't find open groups. The only choice we had was to find continuing groups—existing groups—and try to get them into that existing community, but we all know how hard that is. So the thing that we love about this new format is that there will be a start date—September 13 they launch—and then there'll be an end date, or they'll pause, and then you can decide, "Do we want to re-up up again as a group or do we want to start a different group?" "What do we want to do?" So, we want to create a rhythm where there are *on-ramps and off-ramps* that start to normalize the fact that groups don't have to be a life sentence. I felt that way in the past. I was like, "Man, I'm gonna be in this group forever. How do I break up with these people?" Right? That's what it can start to feel like. But we don't want it to feel that way. We just want there to be some regularity to say, "Hey, this was a good group for now but, you know, our winter is really busy; we're going to be out of town a couple weeks," or whatever. And that is a normalized thing. So we even want to encourage you that the first couple weeks of these groups are kind of a trial period. And so don't hesitate to get involved in a group because you're worried it's going to mean forever. Jump in, see what God does, see where it goes, and if you decide it's not the right time, that's okay. We're trying to normalize the *on-ramps, and the off-ramps.*

The groups are going to be about **10 to 14 people**. We just find, and studies find, that that's a good size. It can be way too big—and no one will ever get to know each other—and that's not good. They can also be too small—where one person can't show up because they're sick or something—and boy, there's just two people left. So some groups will be smaller than 10 people, just the way it works out, but that's the ideal group size that we're aiming at.

The last thing about these groups is something that we hope goes away, but for now we have to say that they're going to occur **online or in person** (for those who are comfortable). My group over the summer only met online, and I think the group that I'm in now is going to continue to meet online, just kind of the way life is set up right now. And so we're going to continue to do all we can to make that a good experience. But for those who are able, who are willing, we know that it's great to meet in person if that's possible. For these groups, right now, you'll be able to differentiate whether they're online or they're in person, so that you'll know what you're signing up for. So that's kind of the nuts and bolts. That's kind of the "what" of these life groups renewed, but I don't want to lose sight of the "why". What's the "why"?

Well, it’s because we want to be people that take Scripture at its Word, when David and the psalm says, **What a good and pleasant thing it is when God's people live together in unity.** We look at that and we say we agree. We agree! And then when we start looking at the New Testament, we start seeing this Christian community. We start seeing all the things that are true of Christian community and all the reasons that it's so good and pleasant, so we agree, and we say, “I need that! I want that!” because Christian community is unlike any other community on the face of the earth. There's no other place where we can say that there's this community that's marked by selfless love, and, Church, we need to live in that type of community. There's no other community where God's Word is spoken, is heard, and that's become a distinguishing mark of a people. There's no other place that occurs and there's no other place where God has chosen to display the fullness of the majesty of Jesus today as He has through the body of Christ. There's just nothing like Christian community, and God has provided it for us so that we will become people that are growing, and that are thriving, and that are living the way that He intends us to live. So, let's not pass it up! We hope you'll join us as we launch out and seek to live as the *Community of Christ*. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You that You are so, so good to us, that You have given us one another. And You're so good and You come to dwell with us in such a way that when we live together, we can say, “Oh, how good and how pleasant it is.” So we thank You for that. We praise You for that. Father, help us to be people that are seeking out ways to be with one another in new and fresh ways, that we might experience the depth of community that You intend for us to experience, and also, Father, that it might be a testimony to the world of how good it is to belong to You. We pray these things in Your name. Amen.

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