

Shaped by Love

Series: Flourish

Pastor Tim Buechsel | 7 March 2021

Part One | Love God and Your Neighbour | Read Matthew 22:37-39

Today Ps. Tim shared a message on being shaped by God's love through community. Community is essentially our experience and exercise of love towards God and towards our neighbour.

- How do you experience or express love?
- Ps. Tim shared his experience of having a person he found hard to love. Do you have any person you find hard to love?

Ps. Tim said, *"We are meant to love God and reflect God's love in our relationships with those inside and outside the Christian community. But we so often miss the mark in loving God and loving others. God wants to form us into more loving, less critical and more gracious people."*

Part Two | Story of Expressing Devotion and Love

Read Mark 14:3-9 and pay attention to different characters in the narrative:

The Woman - *"Jesus through his ministry deeply touched this woman's life. So in response to who Jesus is and what he has done, she expresses her love and devotion by anointing him in this beautiful and lavish way."*

- Who's love for Jesus have you been touched and inspired by?
- Have you ever acted to respond after you have been touched by other people's love? Please share your experience.

The Bystanders - *"Whenever there are acts of love and devotion done for Jesus, criticism often follows. It's easy to use pious excuses to condemn other people. It sounds spiritual to talk about the money that could have been given to the poor."*

- What was the last time you were critical or judgmental of someone?
- When was the last time you spiritually judged another person's actions, using spiritual language to critique their intentions?
- What did you miss to see when you were judging the person?

Jesus - *"Jesus responds by guarding this sacred moment of love and devotion expressed to him, but he does it in such a way that it does not cut off the critics from community and relationship with him, but rather invites them to examine their hearts. There are four ways that Jesus guards this sacred moment."*

1. Defend - Jesus defends the woman and asks the people to “Leave her alone”.
 2. Encourage - Jesus affirms what she has done as a beautiful thing to him.
 3. Explain - Jesus does not just tell those judging the woman to stop, but he also explains what the critics have missed.
 4. Celebrate - her act of devotion and love and her willingness to courageously anoint Jesus will be forever memorialized and celebrated.
- So what do the woman, the critics, and Jesus teach us about how we can grow more loving through community?

Part Three | Growing in Love

The Woman - *“we learn from the woman that a person’s love and devotion to Jesus has the potential to inspire love and devotion towards Jesus in others.”*

- Who in your community is inspiring you to love Jesus and others?
- Who are you inspiring with your love and devotion of Jesus?

The Critics - *“The woman’s extraordinary love and devotion brought out their judgment, criticalness and lack of love. Sometimes we are made aware of our lack of love by members of the community - like Jesus did with the critics - and other times it might be the Holy Spirit’s conviction. It is these moments of failure to love that provide an unexpected opportunity to grow in love.”*

- Have you ever experienced these moments of being reminded by the Holy Spirit to grow in love? Please share your experience.
- What would you do when you are reminded to grow in love?

Ps. Tim reminded us that, *“We think that we grow in love by working harder, but that is actually not how it works. If we try to be less critical and judgmental out of our own strength we will fail.”*

- Have you ever felt that you struggled in loving people? Please share your experience.

Read 1 John 4:19, Ps. Tim said, *“when we run out of love, we turn to God who never runs out of love. Our failures along the way are opportunities again to surrender to Jesus, who is working and shaping and forming us through his grace into more loving people - people that more consistently reflect his love and grace.”*

Spiritual Formation Toolkit

Visit <https://vinechurch.life/resources/toolkit/live-in-community> for some practical ways to start living in community, and invite your group, your family, or your friends to do this together!