Authentic Community

Key idea:

Authentic community requires in person, face to face relationships rather than those mediated by technology.

Key text:

2 John 12-13

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. [13] The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.

Key points:

1. The early church used the technology of its day to send letters, which comprise much of our New Testament.

2. The apostles recognized the severe limits of relationships mediated through technology and always preferred in-person communication and relationships if possible.

3. The idea of face to face relationships - those that are direct and not mediated - is the biblical idea, and that for which humanity is created.

4. Human nature and redemption are inherently relational, and the goal of human existence is seeing God face to face, knowing and being fully known.

5. Authentic community is essential for a local church, and can only exist with a limited number of people.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?

2. Have I ever thought of writing a letter as a form of technology? What other forms of technology do we use to communicate? How would I order these from most effective to least effective for communication?

3. Of all the technological forms of communication, which do I use the most? Why do I use that one? What is its strength for communication? What inherent weaknesses does it have? Do I need to implement any changes in how I am using this technology for communication?

4. Why is having technology mediate conversation inherently less rich than face to face, in-person communication?

5. Is it possible to develop deep, meaningful relationships with personal presence? Why or why not? Can I think of examples where people have developed deep relationships without ever or rarely meeting in-person?

6. During the COVID pandemic, we have used masks to help prevent the spread of the virus. What is lost when we cover our faces? How do face coverings reduce our ability to communicate? How do they inhibit the development of relationship?

7. How many people can I really know? What are the various levels of relationship I can have with someone? How many can I have for each level?

8. Bret said, "Authentic community is local, small community." What does each of the words "local" and "small" indicate about authentic community? How does modern technology try to deceive me into thinking each of these can be ignored? How can I make sure that I invest most of my relational time and energy into authentic (local, small) community rather than the pseudo-community of our digital age?

9. What am I planning to do in the coming months as the weather gets warmer to allow me to spend more time with people face to face? What preparations do I need to make now?

10. Who will I call or see to encourage this week?

For further Study:

Real Relationships In A Cyberspace World (November 1, 2013)

Community In An Individualistic World (October 28, 2013)

Disciples Connect With Others (February 17, 2019)__

Our new Series for Lent: The Freedom of Limits (Human Nature in Genesis 1-2)
Preview of next week: The Key To Human Freedom (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-17)