

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Bless Your Neighbour

This is the fifth message in our series – “Love Thy Neighbour”. We started to dream of what it might look like if we were to take the command of Jesus literally, and loved our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Missional practices like praying for, listening to or even inviting a neighbour over for a meal, must come out of an overflow of the love of God we have experienced, and we want it to spill over into the lives of our neighbours through our loving actions.

Too often, we settle for hoping people find their way to God instead of helping people find their way to God. By ‘BLESS’ing our neighbours, we become people who actually help them experience the love of God.

If we are going to be a people that move beyond hoping to help people find their way to God, there’s got to be a major shift in our thinking when it comes to serving others. The first shift comes in our hearts, it comes in our attitude, before it is going to manifest in our actions.

Paradigm Shift - a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions.

From Crown to Towel – John 13:1-17

The world’s paradigm - The higher you rise, the more power you have, the more wealth you accumulate, means the more leverage you have, to get others to serve you.

Jesus takes that paradigm, and He flips it upside down. Jesus takes a paradigm shift from crown to a towel. The One who sits in the highest position stoops down to serve.

In just a few short hours, Jesus will again be stripped and humiliated, but this time through the violent force of others. The crown will again be set aside, not for a towel, but a cross. He will take on the full weight of our shame and wash us once and for all with His grace so that we can be eternally clean, restored into a right relationship with God.

Just Like Jesus

The message here is simple. Now it is our turn to serve the way we have been served by Jesus. It's our turn to set aside our crown for a towel (Matthew 20:26-28).

If we are going to carry out the mission of Jesus, if we're going to move beyond just hoping people find their way to God to helping people find their way to God, our hearts need to carry the same servant attitude that Jesus had.

Obedience means personal involvement. We can't serve from a distance but must get close enough to get our hands dirty. If we're going to serve like Jesus served, then we must learn to see others as He sees them.

Serving becomes more of a heart attitude you carry, that "as you go" you might find opportunity to serve. It's about a posture of readiness that doesn't seek to avoid the opportunity, but rather stands ready to grab a towel. It's Jesus, seeing a need and stepping forward to meet it.

When Love Comes to Town

Jesus loved to the end, setting aside His crown to put on a towel. It was love that moved Jesus to stoop low before His disciples. It was the love of Jesus that frames this entire story.

This is the love that's been changing the world for the last 2000 years. And the most vivid picture of this love that we can paint with our lives is to serve like Jesus serves.

May you and I, the recipients of His lavish love, follow His example. May we learn to value the things Jesus values. May we learn to see through His paradigm, a people seeking not to be served but to serve. May we lay down our crowns and take up a towel. If we do, I really do believe we could change the world.

This Week's Challenge

Find a way to bless a neighbour by an act of service. There might be a good opportunity for Street Teams to come and bless your neighbour who is really struggling to keep on top of things.

- + Take out their rubbish bins
- + Mow their nature strip
- + Help them load a trailer
- + Look after their pets
- + Water their plants while they are away etc

Discussion Questions

1. Reflecting on Jesus' example, how does Jesus washing the disciples' feet challenge our modern understanding of leadership and service? Can you think of a time when you witnessed or experienced a similar act of humble service?

2. The message emphasises the importance of serving others as a heart attitude rather than a scheduled task. How can we cultivate a mindset of readiness to serve in our daily lives?

3. We all can fall into "task avoidance", which can at times hinder our ability to serve others. What are some practical steps we can take to overcome this tendency and be more proactive in serving our neighbours?

4. Jesus modelled a paradigm shift from seeking power and status to embracing humility and service. How can this shift in thinking impact our relationships with others, both within and outside the church?

5. Our ability to serve others well comes from experiencing God's love ourselves. How have you experienced God's love in a way that motivates you to serve others? Can you share a specific example?

6. This week's challenge is to find a way to bless a neighbour through an act of service. What are some creative and practical ways you can serve your neighbours this week? How can we encourage each other to take up this challenge?

7. Spend some more time as a group praying by name for your neighbours.