

This is US

1. Radical Love; Radical Service

May 1-2, 2021

Welcome to Week 1 of ***This is US!*** I'm Christy, one of the pastors on staff. I'm excited about this series, because it defines who we are as a Church. We are a family of God on the mission of God and over the next several weeks we will explore what that really means. As the family of God...we take our cues from Jesus! He shows us radical family relationships that no one should be able to do better than us! This is US...this is who we are! People who are passionate for Jesus, passionate about one another and passionate about a broken world!

Let's pray and ask God to speak to us.

I heard a story about a guy who was a generally healthy man but suddenly he became really sick. He went to see doctors who ran a battery of tests that showed he had a rare disease. Because they knew this would be a big shock, the doctor in charge asked to speak with his wife to explain his condition first.

The doctor said her husband had a very aggressive, very rare disease. He then encouraged her by telling her that the good news was he could beat it. But it would take a lot of effort and their partnership to help him live. He would have to eat a very specific diet that she would have to cook for him. He would need plenty of rest and an extremely clean environment. She would have to devote herself to serving him to help him get well. The wife would have to bring him in to the office several times a week for treatment, meaning she would probably have to quit working. But the doctor was confident if she devoted herself to doing these things along with the treatments he had a very good chance.

The wife walked out of the room and her husband asked, "What did the doctor say?" She looked at him and shook her head, "He said you are not going to make it." Okay yeah...Not very funny. But this woman was like...This isn't going to happen. It's beneath me. I can't do it. It will take too much time, too much sacrifice. I don't have it in me.

Today we are going to look at the radical ways Jesus loved and served. He was with His disciples and He knew His time with them was short. Jesus was making sure the guys He invested in over the last few years would get every ounce of learning that possibly could. This was His Life Group. His Church. His disciple-making leaders. He was about to demonstrate more radical, counter cultural teaching. Jesus devoted a lot of time with the guys He was raising up.

Turn to John 13:1-5

Verse 1 *It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

There are a couple of things here that are too good to just to keep going without stopping. We don't serve because we are servants; we serve because we are sons! Jesus was going back to the Father and while He was here, He was about the business of the Father. When we say yes to Jesus, we become sons and daughters. We are adopted into this family. Now we get to be part of the family business. I don't act like a hired hand. This is my family's business. I'm building a legacy and inheritance with my family. If it's important to my Father, it's important to me.

We are sons and daughters building the kingdom and partnering with God. We don't go around doing stuff **for** Him. We do stuff **with** Him. Jesus shows us what is most important. The Bible says these people were his own. "Having loved his own who were in the world..."

You are my own. Look at the person next to you...they are your own. Take a good look around, these are my people. This is my tribe. People in your Life Group... they are your own. Some of them might drive you crazy but that's what family does. We are imperfect, but we are family. My skin color could be different, my bank account might have less or more, my experiences could be different, my perspective, my political ideas...all of these might be different, but we are still family. This is US.

The cool thing about it is we don't need to be the same to be a family. It's Jesus that makes us part of this family. These were Jesus' people and it says he loved them to the very end. You are loved to the very end. He stuck with them. This is a family that will deal with messiness and we will love one another to the very end.

Verse 2:

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He gives them this picture. He leaves His place at the table, takes off His outer clothing, put on a towel that a servant would wear and begins to wash feet. We know

that his garment was valuable because it was one the soldiers wanted. When Jesus was crucified the soldiers cast lots for it. They gambled to win it.

This is a remarkable demonstration that I don't want you to miss. It's Jesus in the flesh demonstrating that He leaves His place in glory. Jesus is showing us, "I'm taking off my glory to serve you." Because of his great love, he puts on the garment of a servant, takes the lowest position to make us clean, then goes back to glory. He gets up and takes off the servant's garment, puts his fine robe back on, and returns to the table.

Jesus asks the same of us. Jesus is saying, do what I do. Leave your position and get low to serve people. All people. This was a group of proud people and one who had already betrayed him. He radically loved and radically served them all. He did not make any pre-qualifiers about who he would serve. He did not figure out who was worthy of his service. And we don't get to either.

- We don't get to serve only those who have the same background and experiences we have.
- Or only those we think are moving in the right direction.
- Or those who have great personalities and love God.

No, Jesus asks us to step out of our place and get low like he did and serve.

What would our region look like if we prayed:

"God, How can I wash feet today?"

"Holy Spirit, Show me my assignment today."

"Jesus, Where should I get low?"

"Father, How can I be about the family business?"

Jesus knew his time was short and he was returning to Father. Jesus didn't seek significance; he was already confident about his place. His identity was in being the Son. We imitate Christ by getting low to serve. We put ourselves beneath others and their needs. We do not need to strive to be significant when we understand our place. We can go out of our way for others to love them in significant ways. We are called to demonstrate radical love and radical service. It's time to take off our bling and tie on our towels.

Go with me to verses 12-17.

12. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set

you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus tells us, now we know these things. We will be blessed if we do them! Our family is in disfunction if we only hear what our Father wants but never take action!

Here's what a healthy family looks like:

- People in healthy families anticipate the needs of others in the family.

My family is a working family. Both parents work. Our routine on our way home is to call and check in. Frank, my husband will call me, or I will call him. And the question we ask is, "Do you need anything on my way home?" We work together as a team. Sometimes the answer is, "Please pick up a prescription or pick up yogurt for lunches." Other times it's, "Hurry home, we need you here for a project!" But we know that being part of a family means that our family has needs and we try to figure out how we can ease each other's burdens. We ask, "How can I radically love and serve you today?" Our Life Groups do that too. They listen to one another and they know what the needs are in the group. They meet needs through praying for one another and taking tangible action as well!

- People in healthy families pitch in.

Sometimes I laugh because I hear my parents' voices coming out of my mouth. I will give a list of chores to my kid and if there is any push back, I remind her, "That's being part of the family!" I taxi her around and she takes care of the dishes when I am working. In the morning, I pack lunches; she feeds the dog. Everyone in our family has a job. And sometimes we pitch in and do someone else's job to ease their burden.

Healthy families on mission pitch in. Each week you see people here in our parking lot waving folks in. People opening doors and welcoming you in after a long week; ushers helping you find a seat which has been crucial during a pandemic. A worship team who comes at 7AM to set up in the parking lot and get ready to go. People leading life groups for kids. Tech, sound, and camera people so online folks can join in. People caring for babies. People cleaning between services. Prayer partners at the end of each service. We are a family. We will pitch in.

I read an article that some experts are saying that it will be harder and harder to get people to serve in charitable organizations after a year of staying home. They worded it nicely saying that people have become more selective with their time. In other words we have become more self-focused. But I don't worry about that here at Crossroads. We're different because we have Kingdom values. Throughout the pandemic many could not come and we cared for them by pitching in and doing what we could so they could stay safe. The enemy hasn't stolen anything from us during a pandemic. This is how we radically loved and served one another.

- Many folks who could come in person and serve did so. That's how we loved one another. That's how we remained the family of God on the mission of God.

- Articles and experts paint a future where it will be harder to get people to serve. But that's not what God is showing me. God is showing me that we will have more people serving than ever before.
- Before the pandemic, we had 75 people on our First Impressions team. That's ushers, greeters, parking lot, welcome center. Many of our folks are coming back and we are adding to the team.

And God is also showing me a picture of cross-pollination of generations loving and serving one another. I see a future with students serving in our weekend services. I see a future with students leading life groups. I see a future of all generations working together being the family of God on the mission of God. Families don't operate in silos. They interact with each other. My teenager loves her room; but eventually she needs to come out and be a part of what is going on.

- We are sons and daughters building the Kingdom.
- If we want others to learn to love and serve we have to model it.
- If we want our life group to serve, we will serve.
- If we want our kids to serve God in their church they need to start serving when they are young and they need to see us doing that.
- Our kids aren't in church, our kids are the CHURCH.
- Our kids are needed, they are valued, they form their friendships here and offer their perspective.

God is calling us to have this beautiful display of generations. When you look at us we won't be a young church or an old church. We will be this blend of what families look like.

1. People in healthy families ask one another for help.

That's a tough one. That just is not part of our ethos. We are too proud to ask for help. In this passage in John 13, when Peter realized what Jesus was doing he was shocked. He was not about to let Jesus clean his feet. He began to protest. He was too proud and didn't want Jesus to serve him. Jesus explained to him in verse 8, "**Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.**"

Jesus was speaking figuratively about salvation but literally about serving. He was saying...healthy families take a lowly position and serve one another. When I first came to Crossroads, Frank and I moved here without any family or friends close by to help us out. I was going away for classes for my licensure and he was working night shifts. This

meant I had no one to get my sixth grader from school or to take care of her at night. I knew it would be asking a lot of someone we just met.

- Can you get my daughter at 4pm?
- Can you get her to school by 7:30am?
- Can you feed her?
- Can you let her spend the night with you sometimes?

I humbled myself and reached out to Cindy Morgan who was part of my life group. I asked for help. And Cindy was happy to help me. She kept my daughter for three days and showed me love by serving my child. Sometimes we just need to ask our groups for help. Because healthy families ask for help.

Jesus gathered in this secret upper room for a meal with his disciples. This was a precious time. He had taught them for so long and he needed to drive home his message. This was his Life Group and he was teaching them to be the family of God on the mission of God. They went on to have their supper together. And in a moment we will have communion in remembrance of him. But before we do I want to invite you to be a part of this family.

Some here may think, I can't serve because I need to get my life in order first. Listen, your life comes into order when you surrender to Jesus. You make Him Lord. He washes you. Some might say, I'm not in the family. I've never been in a family. I've never felt like I fit in. You fit here. We are your family. We are for you and so is God.

Adoption stories can happen today. Today might be a day to repent and follow Jesus. Repent is a simple word that means to go in a new direction. So simple. In a minute we will share in communion. You do not have to be a member of Crossroads Church to celebrate communion. We are going to pray and ready ourselves.

Jesus looked around this upper room and saw a bunch of guys that he was trying to teach to willingly take lowly positions. These were guys who argued a few times over which one was the greatest.

I can just picture it:

John: "I'm his favorite."

Peter: "I walked on water."

Bartholomew: Was he even one of them? How could he be great? Bartholo-Who? Who would even remember him?

And Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords takes off his glory and assumes the position of a slave in order to build the family business. And he calls us to the same.

This is US.

- We are a family who will radically serve one another.
- We will radically love and serve one another in our groups.
- And we will lock arms and radically love and serve a broken world together on mission.

Serving isn't what we do, it's who we are. It's not our job or a chore; it's our identity as part of this amazing family!

We are not spiritual consumers; we are the church and we exist for the world.

We are a missionary organization; a family living on mission, radically serving one another and locking arms to serve others.

If you spend your days on you, you will live an empty life.

If you are here and not part of what is happening, you are robbing yourself of what God wants to do in you and through you.

If you want to see change, start serving.

If you want to be an imitator of Jesus, get with a Life Group and serve.

- This past week 80 students and 30 adult volunteers went and served people all over our region. Radical love, radical service.
- **Carolyn Palmer** is a Life Group Leader who noticed during Covid that her more seasoned group members were suffering in different ways. The isolation was harder for those in an older generation. Some of them had suffered losses and were dealing with grief. Carolyn led her group in ministering to one another in ways that kept them feeling loved and encouraged during this time of isolation. Phone calls and cards became the regular rhythm of the group. Now Carolyn radically loves people outside the group who are dealing with grief and loss through a type of support group. She did not wait for people to come through our doors; they weren't ready for that yet. She went to them. You may have heard us use the phrase 5 front doors to 500 front doors. We have 5 front doors in our regions, but we want to make 500 front doors through our Life Groups. It's starting to happen. People experience the Life Group first and experience radical love. Radical Service.
- **Jonathan and Jessica Denk /Mission Con40.** Jonathan says, "I'm so proud of my wife and kids for listening to and obeying God's prompting." Jessica's Life Group jumped into action with them. The first 24 hours are crucial for people in

recovery leaving rehab. They organized a packing party and made 76 backpacks to support recovering addicts on their journey. Radical Love. Radical Service.

- **Food Distribution** For weeks Crossroaders showed up to make our food distribution happen. 330,000 pounds of food, 13,000 pounds to individuals weekly from our parking lot and the rest to other partners impacting 8 counties and 3 states. In 9 degree weather people bringing a forklift to our parking lot, bringing a pallet jack, unloading boxes, loading them again. For weeks, every Wednesday. From a guy who is in college to people who switched their days off to be there, to retired people. People were prayed for, people received food, people saw Jesus through servanthood. Radical Love. Radical Service.
- This is a photo of **Mark Duffy** and his wife **Kaitlyn**. After organizing a simple act of kindness to bless a neighbor, God prompted Mark to begin a nonprofit to help people who are in need. Radical Love. Radical Service. Recently, there were some things Mark needed for a project that we were able to assist him with. He wrote me a note that said, "Pray for me to do the next right thing."

Radical love. Radical service.