

Sermon 03-22-2026  
We're All Related – Rev. Bruce Batchelor-Glader

Psalm 133

Today is the fifth sermon in our Lenten sermon series “Our Family Values”.  
The first four messages were preached by Pastor Markus Wegenast and he did a great job focusing on the first four value statements.

To review, they were:

- Church of the Saviour is centered on Christ.
- Church of the Saviour welcomes all people.
- Church of the Saviour respects and celebrates diverse opinions.
- Church of the Saviour embodies love, grace and generosity

Now we are at the fifth and final value statement:

- Church of the Saviour forges enriching relationships.

If you were looking forward to Pastor Markus explaining this one, I can imagine your befuddlement seeing me here behind the pulpit.

I think that this sermon will take us all in some interesting directions and only enhance our understanding of the five value statements

If you're skeptical, remember the first four value statements and stay centered in Christ, open to different opinions, showing me love, grace and generosity and a warm COS welcome.

The church by definition is a community of people united in faith.  
The website explains the fifth value in this way:

This value is practical. If we intend to gather together often, we should take every opportunity to enhance our relationship in a variety of ways. There should be stuff to do.

For most of my life I was taught that the most important thing about our faith was summed up by Jesus when he told us to follow the two great commandments:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” - Matthew 22:37-38

It's love of God and others that is at the center of it all.

This is important, but I am going to suggest that before we can get serious about love for God and one another, we need to establish intentional relationships with one another.

Because, before we are introduced to love in the Bible, we are called into relationship.

In the Book of Genesis, when God creates humanity, he does not tell Adam and Eve to love one another; God creates them to be in relationship with one another first and to care for all of creation.

In the first creation story, God creates humanity and places them in charge of all living

creatures. It's not love, but God's sense of order and our responsibility to care for creation.

In the second creation story, the man is created first but "It is not good for man to be lonely".

In that memorable scene in the Garden when the two decide to break the rule about eating from that Tree of Knowledge, the essence of their sinful choice is not their lack of love for God, but rather their broken relationship with God – they hide when they hear God's voice.

They are cast out from Paradise, ashamed and aware of their nakedness. But before sending them out God does two things: God makes clothing for them and God goes with them.

This is not described as love, but it is an example of God's intentional relationship with us which does involve forgiveness.

Marital love is not mentioned in Genesis until chapter 24, when Isaac takes Rebekah to meet his mother:

"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her." – Genesis 24:67

Creation itself places us in relationship to God and one another. As we live out our relationships and open our lives to new possibilities, love begins to be seen.

It is our relationship with God that offers the best possibility for forgiveness, hope and new beginnings. The story of God's love for the world is seen through the covenants that he makes with people that focus on mutual faithfulness.

What is the purpose of life in the Bible? What is the destination of life at its best?

I believe that it is the Kingdom or reign of God. Everyone is a child of God and we are all in this together. Love breaks down the walls of division, raises up valleys and lowers mountains. We share in a peace and a love that will never end.

The best starting point is also the best ending: Relationship with all persons.

Real love is very demanding. True friends are hard to find. Both love and friendship require commitment.

Relationship is the solid rock on which love and friendship are built.

Grace is the pathway for relationship. That is why everyone is invited to share in the sacrament of communion, even if they are visitors without an official membership in "the church".

Our events and mission opportunities are open to all, as well.

We cannot do mission and ministry to the world without the understanding that God's world includes all persons, all faiths, all languages, all cultures.

Psalm 133 is listed as a "Psalm of David" and was originally written to be sung at a time when people would return to the Temple in Jerusalem for religious festivals.

<sup>1</sup>How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony!

<sup>2</sup>It is like the precious anointing oil running down from Aaron's head and beard,  
down to the collar of his robes.

<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew on Mount Hermon, falling on the hills of Zion.  
That is where the Lord has promised his blessing—life that never ends.

The Jewish Study Bible dates this much later than the time of King David and sees it as a psalm of hope for the divided kingdoms.

Mount Hermon is the tallest peak in the northern part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel; its mountains are snow-capped and the source of refreshing water. The hills of Mount Zion are just outside Jerusalem in the desert land of Judah.

It is a song of hope for Jews that when their eternal divisions cease, they will find wonderful harmony.

The story of Jesus is one in which He enters into a world in which the Jews are living under Roman occupation and religious leadership is compromised and broken down in the process.

Rather than utilizing the rich or powerful to set things right, Jesus calls ordinary people to be his disciples and then he spends three years in relationship with them, preaching and teaching about good news from God that is no respecter of what the world finds significant, extending grace and healing beyond belief.

It's more than a broken world can bear, and Jesus is put to death on a cross.

The resurrection happens and God's love in Christ is set free to transform our lives.

At its best, the church will be transformed in ways to grow internally in Christ and intentionally in outreach ministry to the world.

That's God's ultimate plan, but Kingdom living depends upon our willingness to grow daily as we journey together.

First, we are called into relationship with each other.

Then – and we have no control over this – some of our relationships will turn into friendships.

And then – once we know that the love of God can be counted on and we have some who we can genuinely love – we are called to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute our faith.

If we are able to live out this kind of faith, bridges are built and walls of division come crashing down.

Think about ALL of the pathways of relationship that are here for us.

There are not only Christian Education opportunities from preschool to adult (and toddlers of all ages), and not only on Sunday mornings. There are classes on Wednesday evenings and sometimes on Sunday nights.

If you can only join us online, I know of an adult class that meets on Tuesday mornings at 10 am that's a great group of people. Cindy Coggins is our class leader. We meet in person but also have a way for people to study alongside of us online.

There are wonderful music groups for all ages.

Youth groups are here to help young people to think about faith, consider going on mission and music outreach trips and make some of the best friends you'll ever have.

We have concerts, parties, meals, and simply fun events to celebrate life.

We also know how to walk alongside of one another when life presents challenges.

Often you will develop close relationships and friendships with others dealing with the same stuff.

It's all pretty incredible, when you think about it.

It's there for you, if you want it. It's up to us to follow through and offer it.

If God is at work in the church, in spite of occasional setbacks and stumbling blocks, our faith in the church will not be vanquished.

Christ is able and willing to be a part of our relationships – in the church and beyond the church – leading us to love and care for one another whenever possible – and then to see the entire world as our parish and extend that grace and inclusion to the entire world.

It's so good to be with this family of faith. It's true – we're all related!