

Caring for One Another
“Remember the Disciples”
May 8th (2022) Sermon - Chris Barnes

Readings: John 13: 34-35; Acts 4: 32-37; Romans 12: 9-21 and 1 John 4: 7-21

Good morning brothers and sisters.

Over the last three Sunday's, we have focused on the Resurrection -and for very good reason. The resurrection is our ultimate hope. A hope that transforms our minds and our hearts.

Today, we return to our focus for this year of **“Real transformation”**. A focus that we are being guided along by following the book **“Love Your Church”**. This is a very easy book to read and one that will continue to speak to you through multiple readings.

So far in this focus of Real Transformation, we have covered the themes of Belonging, Welcoming and Gathering. But of course it does not end there - we actually need to grow together when we are gathered. Which brings us to our next theme (Caring).

Caring is such a vital part of being a church. It really connects what we have talked about before (3 themes) - with what is to come in terms of Serving, Witnessing and Sending.

Today, we will begin examining this theme with an overview of Caring - in particular (caring for one another). Why it is so important to care for one another, and the witness that the church is to the world through our care for one another.

Remember the Titans (2000 Movie)

At the beginning of the chapter on caring in the book “Love Your Church” - the author Tony Merida mentions the movie “Remember the Titans”.



Picture of football team from movie

For those of you not familiar with this story/movie.....

This movie was about the 1971 T.C Williams High School football team located in Alexandria Virginia. Now, despite racial segregation in public schools being abolished in 1971, all other high schools in the region had remained segregated up to this time and T.C Williams High school was placed with the “difficult” task of trying to lead the way of being the first bi-racial high school - this was forced upon the school after many of the black-only schools were shut down due to lack of funding. And it was the football team of the high school that would have to lead the way.

The players of the football team (led by their coaches Herman Boone and Bill Yoast), would be called upon to do something that seemed impossible at the time. They were essentially being called to change the landscape of Virginia - they were being called upon to understand and live out what it truly meant to be ONE people. ONE Community.

And this difficult task would soon have a blueprint in how it could be achieved - primarily due to the vision and faith of the coaches. Their plan was fourfold:

- The players needed to genuinely love and care for one another.
- They needed to stand out and be willing to be different from the status quo.
- All players and coaches needed to make sacrifices.
- Needed to be teammates / not competitors.

If those four goals were met - not only would they be able to succeed as a team on the field, but they could massively impact the world around them for the better. A little more on this story in a bit.....

The Church

Now to shift to the church - we can start thinking about caring for one another; by looking at our sentence of Scripture today (John 13: 34-35). **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”**.

These were the words of Jesus the night before he was crucified as he had dinner with his disciples. This was when he shocked them all by wrapping a towel around his waist and washed and dried their feet.

Once he had finished washing/drying their feet, Jesus told them to go out and do just what he had done. In other words, they were to serve other people and meet their needs - not out of guilt or compulsion, but out of love and compassion. Washing their feet was a vivid, concrete demonstration of the love Jesus wanted them to carry with them everywhere they went - **especially with their care for one another**.

Jesus went on to tell them that this was the key to accomplishing the mission he was giving them as he said in the next **verse (35) “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”**.

The calling is very high for disciples of Jesus in regards to caring for one another. Thankfully though, we have a God who has been there and done that and who will

transform us in both of our minds and hearts by his Holy Spirit, to be able to accomplish this command. The calling is hard but when we understand the why and the how - it not only becomes possible but it also becomes something that we will desire deep down to do.

Gettysburg

The coaches and players of the T.C Williams football team knew that they were facing an insurmountable task.

To make the situation harder for them; there was also internal tension and obstacles within their team. Many of the players had never even associated with the other race, let alone gone to battle together on the football field.

- There was even friction between the two coaches as Herman Boone was made head coach over long-time coach Bill Yoast.
- There was tension over who would get the starting positions (leading roles).
- There was deep mistrust within the team which never translates well for any group of people.

It was clear that the team needed to understand who they were and why their calling was important. So to help with this the coaches took the whole team on a team-building trip to Gettysburg college.

And it was during that trip, that they came together as a team. And it was really because of one of their early morning runs, when they came upon the graves of 50,000 men at Gettysburg. It was here that they would come to truly understand why their calling was important.



Picture of Gettysburg Cemetery

Here they realized that 50,000 men died mainly for the same reason that they were still fighting over. These young men had a chance to be different and make a difference. For whatever reason, God had placed them in that position, in that time.

The Church of the Cross

For us, the church, it is the cross that helps us to understand who we are called to be and why this calling is so important. It is summed up well in these verses: **(1 John 4: 9-12)**

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. one has never seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us”.

This here is the message/the truth that leads us to understand why we need to love and care for one another. When we approach the cross, we realize that we are to be more than a community that just gathers. We need to be a gathered caring community. And we need to understand this before we can go and make a difference to the world around us. We need to let this truth from **1 John** hit home, similar to how the Gettysburg experience connected with the T.C Williams football club.

And when this truth hits home: we will understand that the church is to be:

- A caring community (like we read about in our Acts Reading).
- Real Care is needed (Love in action like in our Romans reading).
- We need to make sacrifices for each other. When others begin to come before ourselves (even just a little) that’s when a caring community begins.
- Not rivals or competitors - we are brothers and sisters (a family).

This is when the family dynamic of the church begins to occur. The caring begins to shape us into a family.

This is easier said than done. We obviously need help with this type of caring for one another. Thankfully, we have a God who understands how hard this can be for us and actually helps us to care for one another: We read in **verses 13-16 of 1 John 4:**

“This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”

God’s Spirit (Holy Spirit), will help transform our minds and hearts to follow his command to love and care for one another.

And I want to share four practical concepts/notions that can help us all grasp how God will help us care for our brothers and sisters:

1) (Servant hood over Servitude)

- Servant hood indicates willingness, choice and voluntary commitment while servitude implies bondage, slavery and involuntary labor.

There is a massive difference here when it comes to caring for one another. Servant hood is acting out of commitment and love; its healthy and uplifting for everyone. Servitude is acting out of duty and fear; its unhealthy and even demeaning at times. At times even worse than no care at all.

We love others because He first loved us. This is the attitude of Servant hood.

The Holy Spirit will help renew our mindset and the attitude of our heart towards servant hood. We should be praying for this desire to increase in us.

2) God is the Cure-giver

When Caring, Christians are called to focus on the process of caring while leaving the results to God. All caregivers serve people in need, but Christian caregivers are unique in that they trust God for the outcome. The Holy Spirit works through your caring to provide the cure - **In God's time and God's way.**

Even in our listening there is so much that the Holy Spirit will do. The Holy Spirit moves powerfully as we allow others to verbalize their needs and desires.



Pic of Stephens Ministry Logo - Christ is the Cure-giver /we are the Caregivers.

We can all be sure that God is actively caring for the person in ways beyond our immediate understanding. Let's remember, God has a much deeper and broader understanding of the person than we ever could, and God loves the person in need of care far more than we can possibly imagine.

Perhaps this notion takes a bit of trust and faith on our part when providing care for others.

3) Understanding God's constant presence

One important way that God works through our care-giving is by providing his constant presence. We are truly never alone in our care - God is there **all the time.**

By remaining aware of God's presence with us (strengthening us, guiding us, giving us courage, and working in through us), we can feel confident about providing the care people need.

And again - recognizing God's presence in our care-giving is closely tied to trusting that God is the cure-giver. God is always with us, working through our care to provide hope and healing.

Whether it is a huge life situation or a simple need, the Holy Spirit is with us and working through us continually.

4)Prayer and Scripture

Both prayer and scripture are incredible tools for caring for one another. Just like in a worship service, the Holy Spirit will do incredible things through prayer and the reading of God's Word - in our caring for one another. God will move through our prayers and through His Word being shared.

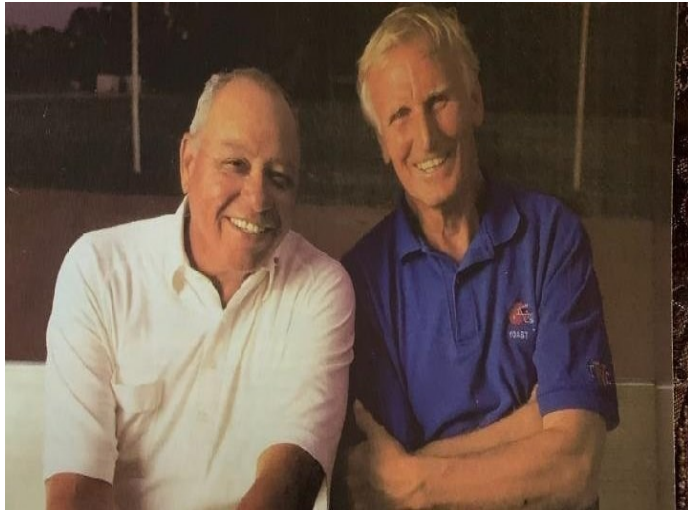
Remember the Titans?

In 1998, a writer named Gregory Allen Howard was sitting in a barber shop in Northern Virginia and he listened in as everyone in the barber shop talked about an amazing football team that impacted so many people. Immediately Mr. Howard asked when he could watch this team play - and everyone laughed. They laughed because they were talking about the T.C Williams Titans football team of 1971.

But on that day he was able to hear the story of this team. A football team that was able to impact the minds and hearts of so many in the world around them:

- a team that genuinely loved and cared for each other and therefore all players were able to maximize their skills and contribute to the team.
- a team that had the courage to stand out from the world around them and be different and in doing so they were able to encourage change for the better.
- a team full of individuals who made sacrifices for the betterment of the group - not because they had to but because they wanted to.
- a team that became full of brothers rather than rivals/competitors, and in doing so they obliterated barriers.

In preparing for this sermon, I wanted to do my proper study of this true story so I watched the documentary of the behind the scenes making of this the movie **Remember the Titans**. To no surprise, I found out that both of the coaches were men of God.



Picture of Coach Boone and Coach Yoast.

Coach Boone had sensed a calling on his life to help ease racial tension. Coach Yoast, at first wanted to be a preacher but felt he could make more of a difference in the lives of young men coaching football. Both were placed there for a reason for a calling that went far beyond themselves.

The title of the movie “Remember the Titans” reflects a phrase near the end of the movie where coach Yoast encourages his team to overcome yet another obstacle as the refs had been bribed to ensure their loss. In doing so, he encourages his players that they will be remembered (Titans) in how they responded. To be remembered - not for their championships on the field but for their victories off the field.

The fact that they were talked about 27 years later in that barber shop, which led to Gregory Howard writing a script for that movie would validate that rallying cry by coach Yoast. **We have remembered the Titans of T C WILLIAMS High.**

Remember the Disciples

Jesus commanded us to love and care for one another. Not because he wanted to be rigid or legalistic, but because he knew how important this love/care was for his church to be able to grow and mature together. In addition, how important this love/care for one another would be for our witness to the world around us to be able to fulfill our mission. It’s a care that is not available through many other institutions; simply because the care of other institutions is not modeled and empowered by the Creator and Sustain-er of the Universe.

And in our main reading today we are encouraged by remembering what God has done for us:

“We love because he first loved us” - 1 John 4:19

And we follow the command with obedient hearts by help of the Holy Spirit because we understand the verse:

“And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister” - 1 John 4: 21

It is through the renewed understanding of our minds and hearts that we are transformed to be able to offer the care for one another that God desires from us:

- we can become a modern-day version of the biblical community (Acts) - that can provide the care and support for hurting people, and therefore also equip all people to use their gifts in caring ways.
- We can provide real loving care as we model the love in action mentioned in the Romans reading. Trusting that God is the cure-giver and that He is always present.
- We can make sacrifices for each other when we have an attitude of Servant hood and not servitude.
- We can then become a **family** that is built on our love of Christ and spurred on by our Holy Spirit-empowered care for one another. And with that, we will all grow in our faith and be prepared to continue on with our calling as a church.

This type of caring is not about the church being a hospital - It is about the church being able to fulfill its purpose of being and going. The type of care that Jesus commanded looks to restore and build up, so we can go on to serve and witness.

This is what Stephens Ministry is all about. Providing the care needed to allow the Holy Spirit to work and do amazing things. Walking alongside our family members to help them get to a place that they then can go do the same.

And this type of love and care for one another goes a long way to witness to the world; that we are indeed different. And we can have confidence that we will stand out from other caregivers because we leave the results to God. God will do amazing things through our love and care, and others will be drawn to know God through our servant hood.

Closing thought - If we here St. Aidan’s.....



Base our love and care for one another on God’s love for us, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through us, then we will be built up as a family and we will be a

shining witness to those around us. Our care for one another in this way, will transform our minds and hearts along with the minds and hearts of the world around us. **Just like the Titans of T.C Williams High.**

The world will remember us because of our care for one another.

The world will remember the Disciples of Jesus, from St. Aidan's.

AMEN