

## Connected Worship Sermon Notes

### 04.01.18 Holy Habitats

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Earliest description of church we have from scripture. Do you recognise it? Can you spot any similarities with your church family today?

10 Holy Habits:

- Fellowship
- Breaking bread
- Eating together
- Giving
- Service
- Gladness & generosity
- Worship
- Prayer
- Bible teaching
- Making more disciples

Tony Pullin '*Making Disciples*': "Discipleship flourishes in an atmosphere of grace; it withers in an environment of rules"

**Habitat:** the natural environment of a living creature or plant. From latin, literally "it dwells"

**Habit:** a settled or regular practice, often difficult to give up or change; in psychology, is an automatic reaction to a specific situation; from Latin, meaning to have or to consist of. Originally used to refer to dress, or a kind of identifying clothing eg uniform, nun's habit.

Jesus came from community of Trinity; He called His 1<sup>st</sup> followers into a community; a dysfunctional, oh-so-human rag-tag bunch, but called by the only human that was fully divine into a fellowship of close-knit family of believers; a safe environment to learn, try, fail, forgive & be forgiven, love & be loved, be held accountable, stretched, challenged &

encouraged; then sent out to do likewise, and regroup, reflect & recharge before going out once more.

Gathered & scattered, gathered and scattered. Church from Greek 'ecclesia' meaning gathering.

Breathing in grace, breathing out mercy. Drawing from the well of Living water to pour out on others. All the habits flow out from the Spirit's promptings in us, God's provision for us and Jesus example to us. Expression of our faith, not a duty to be performed.

Holy community – a family made whole in Love. Relationship at heart of universe – everything relates to everything else, God Himself is relationship, Love.

Holy Habitat? One where we can flourish in our God-given, Jesus-won, Spirit-enabled identity as a child of God, with our unique set of gifts, character and passions, not for our own self-fulfilment, but for the glory of God and the establishing of His Kingdom, worked out in wholesome, joyful, life-affirming flourishing of perfect Love.

Holy Habits? The means to the end. In practising these things, we form good habits that will weather the storms of life, provide us with sustenance in the lean times, and enable us to react to all things in a Christ-like manner.

So what does a good church look like? Sound like? Act like?

How do we fit in to that Holy Habitat? Will we feel at home, or have we some old habits that need to die, some areas of our character that need to be refined, redundant baggage that needs to be left behind?

Word of the moment seems to be "connected" – it's everywhere! Reveals our deepest need as humanity – to love and be loved, to know ourselves valuable to others, wanted, needed and to be able to give & receive that worth. But deeper still is the ultimate need to know we have a meaning beyond the here & now, that our life has purpose, value. Only satisfied by knowing God through Jesus; even when we're alone, we are

not alone because God loves us, knows us and longs to be known by us.

When we find God, and satisfy that deep hunger within us, we naturally want to share this good news, and connect with others. Like the drowning man who finds himself rescued, or the ill patient who finds a cure, we strain toward the light like a seedling struggling above ground, and delight in finding others doing likewise. Suddenly we have meaning, purpose, a common goal, something beyond ourselves to focus on and work towards.

Our faith is deeply personal – thriving on relationship with our Heavenly Father - yet flourishes best when we journey with others, learning, teaching, praying and being prayed for, sharing all we have and being accepted for all we are.

It's not enough to simply exist, to just go through the motions – we have to be awake, alert, vibrant, alive. So often we use passive, submissive language to express our faith, when our great commission – our co-mission with God is not to be quiet as church mice, but to be roaring with the voice of the Lion of Judah! We must be intentional, purpose-driven in our mission to declare God's Kingdom is here, now, for all to enter.

Look again at that description of the early church – no passive, sitting around waiting for things to happen, meek and mild fear-driven defeated deflated down-hearted unexpectant and down-trodden hesitant bunch of people, but a pro-active, passion-filled, life-affirming, high-energy, ground-breaking, wound-tending, tender-hearted, resource-sharing, community-building, victorious, praises-singing, prayer-full, Spirit-led family of God.

Read through Acts, read through the gospels, in fact, read through the Bible and you find a constant thread of humanity in relationship with God – called by the Father, made known to us by Jesus, and united by His Spirit

New Year, new you? Renewed covenant, new church – not find a different one, but commit to establishing the best

environment for disciples to be welcomed, nurtured and grown? As family of God we go...