

Jesus brings a BETTER COMMUNITY

(Hebrews 10:19-25 & 12:28-13:6)

O, how we need community in our *individualistic* Western society, where we take Robert Frost's {DP} saying "*Good fences make good neighbours!*", and try to improve it with "*Higher fences make better ones!*".

Nowadays many Aussies have no doorbells installed because the *only* people who come knocking are salespeople and Jehovah Witnesses [if there's a difference]!

And with electric garage doors, people enter & exit their homes *inside* their car. Barely a chance to see a neighbour outside and say a simple "G'day!"

Prepping to plant a church in Logan, trying to find a community hall to rent on a Sunday – there hardly are any? Where do people gather anymore for a sense of community?!

More than ever, people are *lonely, isolated, and struggling*.

Our Lord Himself uttered these beautiful but epically challenging words: {DPa}

"By this everyone will know you are My disciples: if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)

Tertullian, a 2nd century convert to Christ from a pagan home, wrote of other pagans who witnessed Christian fellowship and said, {DPb}

"Look how they love one another; and how they are ready to die for each other!"

Lucian of Samosata, a 2nd century pagan who remained a pagan, writes about Christians with ridicule. But by his description of Christian community, some wonder why he had ridicule instead of awe & attraction! He writes, {DPC}

"Look at these poor fools' [Christians] disregard of death and imprisonment and the willing self-sacrifice so **common** among them. It was impressed on them by their lawgiver that from the moment they are converted, deny the gods of Greece, worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws, they are all **BROTHERS**"

Lucian was mostly ridiculing them for *sharing possessions* with those in need...like a family!

As children of God, adopted by God's grace, we are just that – a **family**.

Not merely a *club* or a *classroom* but a community. You see . . .

Jesus was not 'writing books' in His earthly ministry; He was creating a new community! A new community with a new 'standard':

"A new commandment I give you: love one another just as I have loved you!" (John 13:34)

Astoundingly awesome! So the Title of this morning's message is this: {DPa}

*Jesus brings a BETTER **COMMUNITY!***

If our church, or any church, does not fit the description of Jesus (and even unrepentant pagans looking in on the church) – as a loving, godly community – we're missing the mark!

This morning's main idea is this: {DPb}

To encourage our drawing near to God,

We draw near to each other in godly community. (Repeat)

Last week, we left off at Hebrews 10:18, with Jesus' Better *Sacrifice*, {DP} 'opening the door to heaven', giving direct access to God for any & all who trust in Jesus. Now . . .

We enter a practical section with a phrase repeated 3 times in 3 verses, "**Let us**" {DPa}

LET US draw near . . . (10:22)

LET US hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering . . . (10:23)

LET US consider how to stir up one another to love & good works . . . (10:24)¹

Clearly, one of the ways we 'draw near, hold fast & stir up' one another is through lives that **EXEMPLIFY** endurance in the faith, because in 10:26ff., the author offers a final "warning" section about persevering in the faith. Then comes chapter 11, the epic "hall of faith" chapter about **examples** of persevering in the faith, Jesus being our ultimate example, chap 12. So chapters 11 & 12 {DP} unpack 'holding fast' of 10:23.

The other significant way we 'draw near, hold fast & stir up' one another is in godly community. {DP} 10:24-25 is unpacked in chap 13. The writer returns to his "Let us" challenges at the end of chap 12, launching chap 13 instructions {DPb}

Therefore **LET US** be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and so **LET US** offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe. (12:28)

What is 'acceptable worship' in the New Covenant? This is key!

Ignore the man-made chapter breaks. Chapter 13 begins, "Let brotherly love abide/continue . . ." and then unpacks what this brotherly love 'looks like.'

'Acceptable worship' is found in **radical Christian community**, life together, confessing Christ & treasuring Him in gratitude for His all-sufficient grace. So the writer concludes this instructions section with a summary 'Let us' in 13:15-16, {Dpc}

Through Jesus, then, **LET US** continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of **LIPS** that acknowledge His name. Do not neglect to **DO GOOD & SHARE** what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." (13:15-16)

'Acceptable worship' in the New Covenant is practical, radical Christian community that stirs up one another by **Lips** of praise & **Lives** of loving good deeds!

The next chapter, Chapter 11, the 'hall of faith', is huge.

Since I am taking us through Hebrews in 'sections' where Jesus is "Better" in distinct ways, I want us to consider chapter 11 next week, and this morning, let's "connect the dots", the "let us" dots of Christian community in chapters 10 & 13, the mutual love instructions for true Christian community that stirs us up to love and good deeds.

OUTLINE: {DPA}

1. Drawing Near (10:19-22)

2. Holding Fast (10:23)

3. Stirring Up (10:24-25)

...by...

Radical Community (chapter 13)

A radical community of God's transforming grace in Jesus Christ.

¹ Two of these three are identical to the "Let us" we've **already** considered in chapter 4:14-16

➤ **LET US** then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace (4:16 cp. 10:22)

➤ Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, **LET US** hold fast our confession (4:14 cp. 10:23)

I will only touch on draw near & hold fast, then camp out in the 'Stirring Up' in Radical Christian Community – the new, distinctive focus at this section in the letter.

DRAWING NEAR (10:19-22) {DP}

By “drawing near” the author reiterates the glory of *new covenant access* to God.

God’s very presence, His ‘shekinah glory’ – this marvellous, joyous, holy fellowship of the Triune God – Father, Son & Spirit – eternally satisfied, yet inviting us into their fellowship, that we might know and worship this God...this glory is the *blazing centre of the universe*.

Wow - God **wants us** drawing near to Him!

But in the old covenant, we’ve seen drawing near to God’s holy presence required ritual after ritual, cleansing after cleansing, sacrifice after sacrifice. The *tediously detailed* book of Leviticus was all about *limited* access to a God – limited by sacrifices that did not ultimately deal with sin, limited to one day a year when the high priest *alone* could enter the Most Holy Place in the Temple.

Not just in *public* worship, but even in *private* devotion, there was a sense of needing to face the Temple in prayer (like Daniel), or even to pray at the temple or in the presence of a priest to be heard, like Hannah prayed at the tabernacle, overheard by Eli the priest.

But Jesus changes everything.

Jesus is the better **WORD**, bringing a better **HOPE**, by the better **DELIVERANCE** of a better **SACRIFICE**, leading us to this better **INHERITANCE** – God’s eternally glorious fellowship, the **BETTER REST** for the soul that we all long for!

Note the progression, 10:19-22, summarizing {DPa} all the theology the writer has been building up like a **rolling snowball**, explodes in its practical implications: {DPb}

Therefore, brothers & sisters, SINCE we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new & living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and SINCE we have a great priest over the house of God,
LET US draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

The path to the old temple – limited & lifeless, strewn with blood of the dead (animals) – is replaced by the blood of the *living*, Jesus, our perfect sacrifice gloriously resurrected.

So we draw near not fearful/tentative, *wondering* if unforgiven sins inhibit us, as in the old covenant – which required sacrifices for even ‘*unknown*’ sins.²

No, we come in “confidence/boldness” (v.19) and with “full assurance” (v.22), BECAUSE of Jesus’ Sacrifice paid it all. A *priceless privilege* unknown in the old covenant!

However, drawing near to God **confidently** does not mean **casually!**

Verse 22 says we are to come with a ‘true/sincere heart’ – not mechanically praising God with our lips when our hearts are far from Him.

We’re to assemble ‘*with **reverence & awe** for God is a consuming fire!*’ (12:28,29)

Similarly, verse 22 emphasise our covenant commitment.

² See, for example, Leviticus 4:27-29

"*Sprinkled clean*" is language from Ezekiel, prophesying about God's coming new covenant³, and verse 22 speaking of "*our bodies washed with pure water*", the author is probably also referring to baptism: the new covenant's 'outward sign' of an inward washing.

As a solemn sign of faith, identifying with Jesus's death, burial & resurrection, and identifying with His family, the Church . . . baptism was a sign of covenant commitment.

So, we come confidently, but not casually, to give God the utmost honour He deserves, and to give His family the service & ministry we all need from each other.

And baptism also provides an opportunity to testify/share one's testimony of conversion, as we heard last week in baptisms here. An opportunity to confess faith in Christ. Leads to...

HOLDING FAST {DP}

Heb. 10:23 – Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,

Almost identical to Hebrews 4:14, which we've previously considered, we don't need to say much here, except to highlight that confessing our faith together, encourages our faith.

When those baptised last week confessed their faith in Jesus before you, were you not encouraged?! I sure was!

It's like when you go to a wedding, and hear vows recited, it reminds married people of your own vows, and **rekindles** a desire within you to honour those vows! It's awesome.

So it is when we gather, confessing our faith in Jesus in testimonies, songs, the word read & preached, occasional quotations from our own statement of faith or the London Baptist Confession of Faith. As we restate our commitment to our Lord & His ways/laws, it stirs up covenant renewal in our hearts, so that we do not "waver", as v. 23 puts it.

Why is our hope "**unwavering**" in the new covenant?

Because **God** is at work IN us, as Jeremiah & Ezekiel prophesied.

This is why verse 23 ends with by focusing our hope in God, not self:

"for He who promised is faithful!"

Although we are faulty, Jesus is *faultless & faithful* to forgive us & cleanse us from sin!

[breathe] Now we get to guts of the new truths in our passage . . . {DPa}

STIRRING UP ...BY... **RADICAL COMMUNITY (10:24-25; EXPANDED IN 13:1-5)**

"*You're a stirrer*" is one of my favourite Aussie phrases, especially in an ocker accent.

And the word "stir up" is itself provocative. {DPb}

"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love & good works" (v. 24)

"Stir up" is not a light-on, 'touchy-feely' word. It's an intense word!

It comes from a verb that means to *provoke* or *sharpen* or *spur* (often transl. "spur on")

"[Pauls] spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols." (Acts 17:17)

The 1 other time word is the NT used is when Paul & Barnabas has a *robust debate* about John Mark's readiness to serve in mission: they had a "sharp discussion" (Acts 15:39).

³ See Ezekiel 36:27-29.

What Heb 10:25 is saying: on our own, we get spiritually **dull, complacent!**
So, I need you to 'sharpen' me, to "*fire me up*", stir me in the *positive* sense of stir.

By God's design, we **need** each another to *stay sharp*, to stoke up *endurance* & to spur on one another in the reality of our *radically loving community*.

The author makes the same point speaking about the opposite:

not *neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another"*

The word for "encouraging" is that "come along side" word we saw in Heb 3:13,
*"ENCOURAGE one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,'
so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."*

We cannot *endure* in isolation. We cannot *flourish* in isolation.

Al Mohler, the president of Southern Seminary writes,

*Those who neglect assembling together cut themselves off from the very means whereby
Christ feeds, assures, and protects his people.*

To say, "I can do this alone," is to defy the very command of Christ!⁴

Jesus calls us to be *"the light of the world, a City on Hill that cannot be hidden."*⁵
News Flash: **a city cannot be one person!**

Stoking the fire of what is Christ-like in us,
as well as
Chiselling away what is not Christ-like in us,
happens in radical redemptive community.

That's why the imperatives are collective, "Let **us**", not "me" or "you".

This text is saying you don't worship God acceptably by *merely* coming to a service & going.
Even if you're listening carefully, AM + PM, taking notes!, that's *part* of it, but not enough.
The internet can give you information, sermons.
That's to belong to a "*book club*" not a "*community*".

Coming, sitting & leaving right after is not new covenant worship of radical community.

What is? Chapter 13 unpacks the radical Depth & Breadth of true Christian community.

➤ **RADICAL DEPTH: {DP}**

*"Let **brotherly** love continue."* (13:1)

(This, of course, includes sisterly love!)

'Brotherly love' – we know the Greek word from the city, "*Philadelphia*" (*lit., brotherly love*)

Today, 'Brotherly love' might sounds so cliché, so trite.
But it was radical then as it is radical now!

⁴ Al Mohler, *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*.

⁵ Matthew 5:14

Remember, Lucian of Samosata – he thought it was *scandalous* that Christians viewed each other as “brothers”, because he realised the *radical implications* of family ties.

Recall what Proverbs 17:17 says,
*A friend loves at all times,
 but a BROTHER is born for adversity.*

Family ties run deep; Blood is thicker than water.

We have an *unconditional* commitment to family because they are family.

As the saying goes, “you *choose* your friends, but you *don’t* choose family.”

Often times in families, brothers or sisters are like ‘chalk & cheese’:

with very different *personalities, interests, different irritations!*

You might never choose a bro or sis as a friend, to hang out with . . . ‘them’?!

But because they’re your brother or sister, you rightly feel a bond, an obligation to them.

That what family means: commitment to one another that is sacrificial and loving.

We’re so used to Scripture using the terminology “brothers” / “brethren” (older versions) / “brothers & sisters” (newer versions) . . . we’re so used to this, the impact can be lost.

In the book of Acts alone, fellow believers are called ‘brothers’ over 50 times. **{DP}**

“Brothers, select from among you 7 . . .”(6:3)

“Send relief to the brothers living in Judea.” (11:29)

Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city . . .” (15:36)

From this tiny sample, let’s read verses these again, fully, to see the implications of a radical community of brotherhood in God’s family.

“In order to serve those in need, Brothers, select from among you 7 men, known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint to this task.” (6:2-3)

“Send relief to the brothers living in Judea.” (11:29)

“Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” (15:36)

Notice the radical, caring commitment that comes with new covenant community?

We know each other in deep relationship, and we care for each other deeply...because we are the family of God.

How many of you ladies, young & old, when you know you’re going to stay at home all day and just hang out with family, still put on *all your make up*?

Why not? Because family is transparent, real. Family knows each other: warts & all, pimples & all, wrinkles and all, eyebags & all!

So, too, the people of God as the family of God are meant to be real, transparent, refining – a *redemptive* community where in God’s grace, forgiveness, love and holiness, we encourage Christ-likeness to flourish.

When you belong to a “Club” or a “Class” on cooking, or knitting, or computer coding, and someone leans over & says, “*That girlfriend of yours – she’s bad for you; dump her!*”

I'm sure you'd reply, "Excuse me? This is a computer class! **Mind your own business!**

But *community* is different, since life intersects purposely in community, in family . . . DEPTH of relationship is different, deeper. Privacy plays only a minor role.

In Christian community, we DO speak into each other's lives,
 "so that none of us might be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Heb 3:13)

You don't need extensive qualifications for this. Apart from understanding & experiencing God's grace in Christ, you know what your main qualification is to help a brother or sister?:
You're not them! They're not you!

The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. We need others to see our blind spots!

I love this quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who is not dismissing professional counsellors, but instead exalting **Christian brotherhood: {DPa}**

"Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the Cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of a brother. It's not experience of life, but experience of the cross that makes one a worthy hearer of confessions {DPb}

*In the presence of a psychiatrist I can only be a sick man;
 in the presence of a Christian brother, I can dare to be a sinner.
 The psychiatrist searches my heart and yet he never plumbs its ultimate depth.
 The Christian BROTHER knows when I come to him:
 here is a sinner, like myself...who wants to confess & repent & yearns for God's forgiveness."*⁶

This is why we need DEPTH of *cross-centred, grace-based* community.

We should be striving for significant conversations and sharing of needs before & after Sunday "big church" gatherings.

I mentioned earlier drawing near *confidently* doesn't mean *casually* . . .

"*Don't Waste Your Life*" is a book written by John Piper.
 Maybe we should have a playbook called, "*Don't Waste Your Sunday*"

- How do you prepare to stir up/fire up others on a Sunday?
- What conversations do you come planning to have, encouragement from devotions, etc.?
- What people are you prayerfully hoping to stoke up on a Sunday? Follow up on FB post?
- Will you try sharing a line from a song or a point from a sermon that impacted *you*, and see where God takes this conversation as one is stirred up, and you might be, too!
- It's a long drive for most – do you come early to talk to others & prepped to stay back after, keeping your schedule clear, to *encourage/stir up* one another one another?

"*Don't waste your Sunday!*"

And 'big church' is really a **launching pad** into smaller, more intimate groups:
Home group, Authentic Manhood, Women's Grace Group, Discipleship Journey Group
 The early church met regularly in *homes, intimacy* of community.
 Smaller groups is where community gets real traction, follow through, meets needs.

More than speaking into each other [sharing words/LIPS], we share our LIVES

⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (NY: Harper & Row, 1954), 118-19.

Brothers & sisters share the same *inheritance!*
 We share *resources*, we share *decisions!*

That's a community.

Unless we are *relating* to other at the 'brotherly & sisterly' level, not the club/classroom level, the transforming presence/shekinah glory of God will not deeply impact our fellowship.

Let's now consider the Radical **BREADTH** of Jesus' Community . . . {DPb}

Sharing Homes & Resources. (Heb 13:2)

Here we see the first pair that balance Depth & Breadth,

You see it more clearly in Greek: {DPb}

13:1 – Let brotherly love continue (13:1)
 (*phila-delphia*)

13:2 – Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers (13:2)
 (*philo-xenia*)

Love those whom you know inside your congregation

Love those you don't know outside your congregation!

See the balance of Depth & Breadth?

A quick explanation of "stranger":

Is this saying, 'invite the strange & random axe-murderer inside?'

Not quite! The apostle Peter applies this word *philoxenia* to **believers**:

"Show hospitality to one another without grumbling." (1 Peter 4:9)

But it's too believers we don't know – in NT times, *usually* coming into town with a letter of recommendation, sometimes itinerant evangelists, to support their ministry.⁷

But that's not always the case. Scripture does not limit hospitality to believers with letters of recommendation, nor to just believers. Sometimes it's just strangers in need.

In Scripture, we have this principle of priority:

"As we have opportunity, let us do good to EVERYONE, especially to those who belong to the family of faith." (Gal 6:10)

KEY: The biblical model is so *radically different* to pagan Greco-Roman culture, where hospitality (*hospitium*) was very much a system of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours!"

Hospitality was much more like a **business dinner**, where a 'patron' & a 'client' actually exchanged a written agreement, a *tabula hospitalis*, which was mutually beneficial.

You helped those who could help you, open doors for you. We'd call it "networking". Such "hospitality" was motivated by SELFISHNESS.

Biblical hospitality, however, was to open your home to those that could not help you.

Listen to what Jesus said – not because he was against "meals with friends"; but to challenge the *selfish system* of the day, and the selfish, cliquey tendency in our hearts:

⁷ As in Matthew 10:11, where the concept is clearly there, but not the word *philoxenia*.

*When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or **rich neighbours**, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you.” (Luke 14:12-14)*

Demonstrably **unselfish**. Jesus is a radical Lord, and His community is meant to be, too! Breaking down barriers of social class, race, cliques.

Hospitality to *strangers* is ‘acceptable worship’!

This is why the writer mentions "*entertaining angels unaware*".

In Gen 18 & 19, Abraham, & then Lot, invited guests who ended up being divine messengers.

The same thing happened in Judges 13 when Samson’s parents offered a meal to a stranger.

An in Luke 24, two men on the road to Emmaus, invited a stranger for a meal, and the disguised stranger just happened to be the resurrected Lord Himself, Jesus.

The hosts did not know such at the time of invitation in any of those cases. Christian community does not base hospitality on "**what’s in it for me?**" God blesses, even ‘visits’, those who invite people simply out of lovingkindness.

Does this challenge your sense of biblical hospitality! It challenges mine!

If we’re not loving & hospitable to those we know in the “safety” of known family, How will we be loving & hospitable to those we don’t know?! As Jeremiah writes,
*“If you have raced with men & they’ve worn you out, how can you compete with horses?
 If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? (Jer 12:5)*

What is your hospitality like? How have you been blessed by the hospitality of others? With Christians, don’t make it about *elegance*, make it about *encouragement* in the faith! Share testimonies. Learn from each other as you get to know each other in Christ.

With non-Christians. You don’t need wait for strangers “roaming about”, knocking. How about “strangers” you most likely don’t know living within a couple doors of your home!

Show practical, unselfish love to those inside our congregation, and outside.

2nd Balanced-Pair of Depth & Breadth . . . verses 3 & 4

1] Sharing Time & Sympathy & Food (13:3) {DP}

Remember those who are in prison, AS THOUGH in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”

The idea here is **ministry of mercy & compassion** to those suffering, what today many call the pursuit of “social justice”.

The people ministered to here are *primarily* believers suffering hardship/persecution. Why believers? "*In the body*" most likely means the *body of Christ*, the Church, as Paul writes the Corinthians,

“In the body, if one member suffers, every member suffers with it.” (1 Cor 12:25-26)

And “mistreated” is the word describing Moses in Hebrews chapter 11. And Later in chapter 10, the author refers back to the time of the conversion of the readers, “you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison” (10:32-34).

It took **time** to visit, **energy** to encourage, **sacrifice** of food & clothing & resources.

You see, unlike our system, ancient prisoners in the more merciless Roman system were often given no food or clothing, so these needs were supplied by “loved ones” . . . in this case, the **church!** It’s so *counter-cultural*, since no one except family helped in this way!

Christian community is to be RADICAL, shining a bright light of such love for one another!

And again, Christian love is also to **overflow**, out of our community into the world! Because Jesus left His community in Heaven, perfect Triune fellowship of Father, Son & Spirit, and *entered our community* . . . “for God so loved the world!”

People in prison are often humbled and “ripe” to hear the good news of Jesus and experience the *practical love* of Jesus’ people. Prison ministries abound in Brisbane, some to recommend are *Inside Out* and also *Sycamore Tree*, and are worth pursuing.

Listen: Prisoners need a *new community* when they finally get out, because the people they know on the outside are usually the very people helped put them on the inside! A GBC attender who does prison ministry know someone soundly converted inside prison, was eventually released, and commented that every contact in his phone is a drug user.

We need to be a radical community of mercy because we’ve been shown radical mercy!

So, verse 3 is about counter-cultural *ministry of mercy & social justice*.

The other half of the pair,

Verse 4, brings the *counter-cultural ‘counter-balance’*..what is NOT to be shared!

2] Not Sharing our Bed! (v. 4) {DP}

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Christian community is not some ‘free love hippie commune’!

We have ethical boundaries for the GOOD of everyone in the community.

This ‘pair’ of ‘social justice’ with ‘sacred sex’ was radically counter-culturally back then. The Letter or *Epistle of Diognetus*, written in **130AD**, describes what distinguished Christian community: **{DP}**

“the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country nor language . . . but by their striking manner of life. They marry & have children; but they do not destroy their babies.

They share their table with all, but not their bed with all . . . They are poor yet make many rich” Christians freely shared their *resources* with all – their table (food/meals), their money, but not their bed.

The very opposite of the Graeco-Roman culture, who shared their bed with one & all, but not their food & resources.⁸

⁸ Pointed out by Tim Keller, in “Christ our Treasury”, 2005.

Why? Because their's was a radically *selfish* society/community!
Whereas Christian community is to be radically *unselfish* – putting the needs of others above our self . . . **like Jesus!**

To sleep with someone outside of the **security & commitment** of a marriage covenant is to be put your selfish desires above the good of the community. Such selfishness leads to not only “destroying babies” as Diognetus writes & as we see in abortion mills today, but it also *destroys marriages* of others, eroding community itself.

And as we've seen, using resources/money as leverage in **a patron power lunch** is the opposite of what Jesus said *Christian community* should be like.

Reading the Diognetus quote, it is SO obvious not much has changed, because our Western society is still *radically selfish!*

When I stumbled across today's legal policy of **{DP} AirBnB,**

Verses 3 & 4 and Diognetus' words, *“they share their table, but not their bed”*, just popped w/significance!

First, AirBnB's policy on what you **CAN** require/restrict: your **“Table/Kitchen”**

If by conviction you're, say, a vegan, you can **{DPb}** *“REQUIRE guests to respect restrictions on foods consumed in the residence”*. So in that case, no meats can be consumed in your house or prepared in your *kitchen*.

Striking is the contrast, what you **CANNOT** restrict: what happens in your **bed**. **{DP}**

“Airbnb hosts may not decline a guest based . . . gender identity, orientation or marital status.”

Decades ago, hotel/motel owners turned away couples, saying, *“No ring, no room.”*

Legally this has been stopped: holding to the sanctity of marriage became ‘discriminatory’

But now regarding even your *own home, your own bed*, you've no freedom to restrict guests, once you join **Airbnb**.⁹

Effectively, things have flipped from *“No ring, no room”* to *“No rainbow, no room!”*

Just think about today:

- The same people today crying for “social justice” are crying “sexual freedom” (no v.4!)

That's the political “left”: sleep with whomever, whenever. Define yourself by whatever gender-bender you feel . . . because it all about YOU and your selfish, individual desires.

- The same people today upholding “sacred sex” virtually ignore “social justice” (no v.3!)

That's the political “right”, equally selfish, but focusing on their “hard earned cash”.

As Pastor Tim Keller puts it,

Don't let the world squeeze you into the mould of either side!

Jesus says, Keep verse 3 and 4.

Of course, Scripture also had safeguards/boundaries on sharing your Table & work ethic:

⁹ <https://www.airbnb.com.au/help/article/1405/airbnb-s-nondiscrimination-policy--our-commitment-to-inclusion-and-respect>

*“When we were with you, we used to give you this rule:
if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.” (2 Thess 3:10)¹⁰*

We’re not to enable a sluggard or Lazy Maisy.

But that’s not the point of this passage.

The point is this: in Jesus’ radical community, both *intimacy* & *money* are NOT “for you” to do whatever you want with, but for the good of the community.¹¹

Radical indeed!

We pride ourselves on doing the Bible well – what about community?

If Jesus came amongst us, what would He say about our family?

Where does the motivation to this radical living come from?

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever...it is good for the heart to be strengthened by GRACE, not by foods/rituals.” (vv. 8-9)

Gospel motivation that transforms the heart, from the inside out, because we’ve been shown grace, Gospel grace in Jesus Christ, who *took on the consuming fire* of God’s wrath, so we could know His sweet fellowship.

So in gratitude, honour God’s precepts that bless His community, showing grace to others!

Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled...⁵Keep your life free from love of money – be content with what you have, for God has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (13:5)

Gospel Community does it all, because God’s Blazing Triune Fellowship it all that.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned & killed for opposing Hitler, someone who knew more than most the importance of radical Christian community for enduring in the faith,

{DP} *Even the very hour of disillusionment – with my brother – becomes incomparably [beneficial], because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by that one Word and Deed which really binds us together – the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. When the morning mists of **dreams** vanish, then dawns the bright day of **Christian fellowship**.¹²*

May we be able to confess the same!

PRAYER

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

¹⁰ The Didache, a 2nd century church instruction manual, also warns congregations about travellers who stayed more than two or three days without working.