

1. As we wrap up this series this morning about togetherness, and how we are better together, I want to give you one word that I believe does a very good job of describing what the kind of togetherness we have been talking about really is.
2. The word is **disciple**. When we talk about needing one another and being better together, the image that I think illustrates what the Lord offers us, is best seen in the relationships between the 12 disciples of Jesus.
3. Jesus Christ assembled a group of people, who were constantly together, and through those 12 men he modeled the type of togetherness that is really life changing and life giving.
4. He took a ragtag team of rough around the edges men, and he transformed them into a dynamic group of world changers.
5. And it doesn't take very much time reading about the disciples to realize that kind of transformation was absolutely miraculous.
6. These men were some of the most flawed, biased, attention seeking, misunderstanding loud mouthed men you would meet anywhere.
7. And one of the things that brings me so much hope is that if he did it for them, then he can do the same for any group of people who are willing to surrender to his lordship and allow him to perform the types of transforming miracles that only He can.
8. I am just overjoyed by that truth.
9. But as overjoyed as I am by that truth, I think I am just as grieved by another truth.
10. And the truth is it is possible to be right in the middle of God's obvious miracles and yet still miss all of the benefits that togetherness brings.
11. As great a transformation as there was in eleven of these men, there was one of them who it appears was not transformed at all.
12. He was offered and lived in the exact same environment that all the others had, and yet was not miraculously transformed by the power of God.
13. That is of course Judas.

14. I am not critical of Judas, I am grieved by the fact that he missed nearly everything Jesus offered, even though he was surrounded by it for about 3 years.
15. All of Judas' time with Jesus and all of the time spent around the other disciples can be summed up in a few verses.
16. **Luke 22:3-6** ³Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.
17. **Luke 22:47-48** While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"
18. **Matthew 27:5** So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.
19. Jesus was the greatest disciple maker who ever lived.
20. He was also the greatest miracle worker the world had ever seen.
21. Judas was there when Jesus walked on the water. Turned the water into wine. Healed the woman with the issue of blood. Raised Jarius' daughter from the dead. Raised Lazarus from the dead. Healed the demon possessed man. Made the lame to walk and the blind to see. So many times, that its possible it just because commonplace.
22. And with all that evidence around him, he still betrayed Jesus for money. Was not ashamed to do so with a kiss of all things, and as a result of his guilt lost his life.
23. And I believe that really is what we are talking about. Being together as believers. Being together as disciples literally and truly has a major impact on our life.
24. And obviously, there were several factors at play, and we could examine Judas' life from many different angles, but one key thing I recognize is that Judas was hiding in plain sight.

TITLE: Hiding in plain sight.

INTRO:

1. What does it mean to be hiding in plain sight?

2. It means to be concealed or unseen despite being in full view.
3. It's right there as plain as the nose on my face, but I missed it.
4. How many have ever missed something that was in plain sight? We all have.
5. There is another powerful definition that caught my eye. **To remain unchanged without protest or complaint despite being plainly or obviously apparent.**
6. The situation is what it is. It ought to be apparent to everyone, but yet the situation goes on unchanged. It remains the same.
7. In spite of the fact that Judas was physically together with 11 other men and the Son of God, his true self was hiding in plain sight.
8. In spite of the fact that every opportunity was afforded him, he remained unchanged by who Jesus was, and the miraculous transformations going on around him.
9. Now, obviously Judas wasn't hiding who he really was from Jesus, but we know from scripture he was hiding from the other disciples.
10. In John chapter 13, Jesus, around the table with all of his disciples, predicts that one of them would betray him.
11. Listen to the response of the disciples. **John 13:22** His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.
12. They sincerely didn't know which one of them it was. They had no clue it was Judas even though he was living a double life right in front of them.
13. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved didn't know. In the next verse he had to lean back and ask Jesus for the answer.
14. Now what's interesting is, we might be convinced that John did know, because in the chapter before, Judas objected to an expensive jar of perfume being used to anoint Jesus' feet. He said the money should have been given to the poor.
15. But what we need to keep in mind is that the book of John was probably written when John was in his 70's. So, it wasn't until later that John looked back at Judas' behavior and said this.
16. **Luke 12:6** He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

17. Judas was stealing from the pool of money that Jesus and all of the disciples contributed to, and no one was aware.
18. He was hiding in plain sight. He was unchanged in his heart by the truth of who Jesus was. In spite of the fact that all of the elements were there.
19. Judas had left his old friends, and he was invited to become one with Jesus and the other disciples according to John chapter 17.
20. Judas was given the opportunity to become family with this group of men. He was invited to join a brotherhood. He was invited to become family with God the father and Jesus his son. According to John chapter 15 Jesus didn't want servants, he wanted friends.
21. Judas was allowed to become family because Jesus was the glue that held them all together. In spite of their fighting like brothers sometimes, Jesus kept them moving toward oneness.
22. Judas was given the environment to become family. He was not with Jesus and the others occasionally, he was with them continually.
23. In this family, Judas was exposed to the key elements that create family.
24. He sat under teaching and training.
25. When he sinned or got off track, Jesus was sure to admonish him and provide clear direction.
26. And Jesus was the greatest restorer the world has ever known.
27. Jesus never once wanted to get rid of Judas, it is obvious by how he treated all of their childish ways that this was an environment where they could act pretty foolishly and still be restored to fellowship.
28. Every single element necessary to become, not just a disciple in name only, but a disciple who was being changed by the power of Jesus, was made available to him.
29. And yet, his sinful condition remained intact, hiding just below the surface, even though looking back it probably should have been obvious.
30. So, what is your point pastor? Are you saying we are a Judas if we don't take advantage of the opportunity for family?
31. Absolutely not. No one is a Judas.

32. My point is, if Judas. Who spent almost every waking moment actually with Jesus the savior of the world for over 3 years, could remain unhealthy and unchanged in his relationship with the Lord?
33. Then who am I to think I am immune from unhealthiness, and from not being changed by the power of God?
34. If Judas was susceptible then all of us are susceptible.
35. You see, **one of the things about being a disciple and doing life together with other believers is that it requires us to be known.**
36. In order to grow properly, we have to be known. Meaning the masks have to come off and the walls have to come down, and the real us needs to be present and accounted for.
37. But Judas wasn't willing to allow himself to be known. The real him was hiding.
38. And to be completely transparent. We need to know that being known, not only by God but by other believers can be scary and it can be painful.
39. It requires us to be vulnerable to getting hurt. It requires us to be open to our gunk and our mess spilling out. And I don't like that.
40. But look at the transformation that is possible.
41. Judas wasn't the only one hiding in plain sight.

Peter was hiding in plain sight.

1. What do I mean by that?
2. I have to tell you, Peter is my guy. Mainly because I can identify with him pretty easily.
3. But also because to see what the Lord did in his life gives me hope.
4. If God can change Peter then he can change me.
5. There is hope for me.
6. Peter was always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, and often in the wrong way.
7. He was overconfident in himself, or at least he pretended to be.
8. He made promises he couldn't deliver on. (I won't betray you Lord)
9. He was impulsive. (Cut off the servant's ear)
10. Trouble could spot Peter a mile away. (Walking on the water and then sinking)

11. Prone to some pretty major failures (denying that he even knew Jesus).
12. He could get his feelings hurt easily. (Do you love me Peter?)
13. How many get it?
14. Peter was often a mess. But Peter also allowed himself to be known.
15. He was in the middle of everything Jesus did.
16. He became family with this group of knuckleheads.
17. Thought it was slow and painful at times he was open to teaching and admonishing. Which he got quite often.
18. He was unwilling to quit and give up when he blew it.
19. And all of that, this environment Jesus gave him. This togetherness and this family it changed him.
20. It strengthened him. (On this rock I will build my church)
21. It molded him.
22. It transformed him from a scared guy with his foot in his mouth, to a great leader with the word of God in his mouth.
23. In the book of Acts on the day of Pentecost, after the infilling of the Holy Spirit arrived, with a crowd of thousands of people standing around speculating about what was going on.
24. Who stood up front and center? Good ole Peter. But this time things were different.
25. Acts 2:14-15 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
26. This isn't crazy drunkenness, this is the hand of God.
27. Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
28. Peter. The guy who needed to be changed was now God's agent of change.
29. And the results were amazing. Acts 2:40-41 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
30. What an absolutely amazing transformation in the life of Peter.

31. And again, what brings me hope and peace is in knowing and believing that the same God that transformed Peter can transform me.
32. The same God that changed a ragtag group of men into great men of God has those same loving plans for all of us.
33. The same God that changed the circumstances that looked so bleak (death of Jesus) into an opportunity for wonderful miracles is the same God that can take the mess our world is in right now and do miracles in it.
34. That is the hope that I have.

Conclusion:

1. And if the atmosphere for that change to take place is in a small group of people, who day by day are becoming family, teaching, admonishing, and loving one another, then that is where I am willing to be.
2. I believe I know most of you. I know your heart.
3. And I believe you want to be in the middle of everything God wants to do.
4. And I also believe you have proven you will endure some momentary uncomfortableness if it means giving God the opportunity to do something great.
5. I am going to ask you to stand with me.
6. I am going to ask you to do two things with me.
7. Can we celebrate?
8. And can we dedicate?
9. Celebrate the miracle working power of the God we serve.
10. And dedicate ourselves to being open to how the Lord would lead us corporately and individually?
11. Celebrate the greatness of God.
12. Celebrate the ability of God to transform you, the circumstances around you, and the world around you.
13. Dedicate yourself to trusting Him.
14. Declare your trust in him.
15. Dedicate yourself to being in the center of His will for your life.
16. Closing prayer.