

Service Overview

Speaker: Stephen Bates

Sermon Series: At the Table with Jesus

Message: We see Jesus for who He is

Scripture Reference: John 13:1-17

This transcription was generated by Adobe Premiere. It may contain small errors that don't perfectly match up with words spoken and is provided to assist with accessibility but without warranty. While the document has been edited for spelling and clarity by a member of the congregation, the speaker(s) have not proof-read or corrected this document themselves.

Table of Contents *Click to navigate*

- ▶ [Service Welcome](#)
- ▶ [Pre-Worship Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Worship Singing](#)
- ▶ [Post-Worship Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Bible Reading](#)
- ▶ [Sermon](#)
- ▶ [Post-Sermon Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Post-Sermon Wrap-Up](#)
- ▶ [Video Meditation Exercise](#)
- ▶ [Conclusion](#)
- ▶ [Online Outro](#)

Service Welcome *Speaker: Ben*

Well, good morning and welcome to church. It's a joy to be with you.

See, every time we get together, it's an occasion to enjoy. I pray that you look forward to our gatherings on Sunday together. And if you're aware of the calendar, we're only seven days away from Easter, which means today is Sunday, which is fun. And if you've been joining us lately, there's a verse from Colossians 1:18 that kept on coming up as we were looking through the things that our church values.

And that verse says that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He's the one who's in charge. He's the one who sets the way. He's the one who empowers us and makes what we do possible. And as we gather together, we're really conscious that God is actually at work in this place. He wants to come and meet with us and to form us as his people.

And so as we step into a time of worship, let's be reminded of who our God is and invite him. Invite him to be our work. Invite him to do what he does. Invite him to transform lives and even bring ourselves before him that he would form us as well. So why don't you start? I'm going to pray that we're going to see our Heavenly Father.

Pre-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Ben*

We give this time devoted to you. We gather in your name and we choose to praise and to glorify your name. Would you be exalted above all other things? All of the people all over all other places. Would you be prized in our hearts above all other things? And we invite you, the Lord of the Universe, to come. Holy Spirit, have your way among us. Do what you want to do for us in the ways that you desire to form us. Have your way here Lord, have your way.

Worship Singing

Song: We Have Come by Will Reagan

Song: Unto Your Name by Ben Smith, Pat Barrett

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Oh Lord, would you hear our praise of you. You are a mighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We lift you up and we welcome you and we invite you. Have your way in our life. For God, we surrender who we are to you. We welcome the fullness of your love and your kindness in our life. For your grace, for your forgiveness. We say thank you and we invite you, Lord God, to have your way in our church as well.

You are Lord of this place, Jesus, Head of your church. And it is our delight to worship you. See our delight to follow your lead. So we praise you, Lord God, and we just love doing this life journey and this church journey with you. We bless you. Amen.

Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Well, take a seat, everyone. I just want to say thank you so much, kids, for being part of our worship with us.

I actually was really blessed by the ways that you were worshiping with us just then, so thank you. Thank you. Before the kids go out this morning, I just want to invite you to just a couple of things coming up. And this is particularly as we ready our hearts as Easter comes. You know, Easter can sometimes just slip into a bunch of public holidays that we anticipate or whatever.

But for us as followers of Jesus, this is the most meaningful time, I believe, in our church calendar. And so we want to invite you just to have fresh eyes this Easter, fresh appreciation, fresh affection for Jesus welling up in your heart as we take hold of all that He did, laying his life down on the cross.

And so over the next three days, we have 'Encounter'. For those who may not be familiar with what Encounter is, it is an interactive worship space. But it's not like this where we sit in rows. It's a number of stations in the basement this time. And you can come when you are able and leave when you would like to, and interact with those stations at your own pace, in your own time and just allow the spirit of God to speak through each of those stations that speak into the significant journey that Jesus took as He went to the cross.

So I believe that this is going to be a really meaningful time and a way of just enhancing that Easter story and bringing it to life once again for us, that our affection for Jesus might well up. So, you can visit that space of 'Encounter' – it's open on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights (March 25-27) this week from 7 to 9 PM and also Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning (March 26-27) from 9 to 11 AM.

So come when you would like to bring a friend, bring your children as well into that space and come and let our affection for Jesus well up and then into our Easter services next week as well. So

on Good Friday are our normal service times in the morning—8:45 AM and 10:45AM—but there isn't a 5:30PM service. On Easter Sunday our normal service times are happening as well.

But we'll also be celebrating in some baptisms next Sunday as well. So, if you would like to celebrate this Easter by identifying with Jesus' death and resurrection that we symbolize in baptism by dying to our old self and our raising to new life as we identify that Jesus did exactly that for us. If you would like to be baptised and you've not been baptised before, we would love to talk with you if you just feel like you're thinking, "Actually, that is a step that I can take in my public identification. I am a follower of Jesus." Come and chat with us and we'll we can work out some details for that.

And as they kids leave for their programs, just turn around and meet someone.

--- Break as congregation greet one another ---

And I do want to say welcome to everyone joining us online as well. Alrighty. I think it's so good that we break into conversation and we're relationally committed together as a church community, which is absolutely fabulous.

I can't remember whether I introduced myself at the beginning. I'm Kathy, one of the pastors here. If you're new or visiting today, it is so good to have you here. I want to acknowledge those who are worshiping with us online as well. It's great to have you here as well. And I do want to say thank you to our worship team and our tech team for just leading us so beautifully into that space with God this morning.

This week, many of you will have already heard or read that Ben and has accepted a call to a different Baptist Community Church. And I just want to say that we have been so encouraged over the years to watch Ben grow in his faith and then to sense a call from God into vocational ministry by studying at a bible college. And this week he graduated, which was such an exciting event. And Ben has been part of our pastoral team for the last four years as well.

And I know that for many of who have watched Ben in his ministry role, you'll know that he's like the Pied Piper on our pastoral team when it comes to anyone young adult age and down. He just attracts because he's such a relational man of God and so we're going to miss Ben very much.

But we also know that this is part of being a kingdom building church, that we actually do get to raise up leaders and we get to release those pastors to other places as well. As we farewell Ben, the reason that I've sent him out to so that we could have this conversation together, because I want to let you in on the secret of Ben. We're going to be farewelling him on the 14th of April, and one of the things that we'd like to gift him with as he goes is a book of encouragement that sort of captures the ministry that he's had in this place. And so we would love and we want to invite you to contribute to that book.

You can write a letter, you could write a note of encouragement or blessing as he steps into his future. If his ministry has had an impact on you personally or perhaps on your children, you might want to capture that somehow you yourself as parents. But then also invite your kids to participate in that as well.

So we just ask that you do that on an A4 or within an A4 full size page. You don't need to fill a whole A4 page with words if you're not able to. That's fine. I understand. That's very daunting for introverts. Extroverts, you can take two pages if you want to. That's fine. So it can be words, can be drawings, photos, whatever is meaningful.

But we want to bless Ben with that on the 14th of April. So that doesn't give us very much time. Ben's new church have said that they want him as soon as they can, and so 14th of April will be his farewell Sunday. So we would love to have all of those notes back by the 7th of April.

So you've got two weeks to do that little exercise. If you're able to supply those to us, you can email them to admin@parramatabaptist.com or you can drop them in the response box if they fold up, or you can give them to any of the pastoral team except Ben himself, because this is a secret, right? So very hard to keep a secret.

Anyway, we have very mixed feelings, I think, as we send Ben off. But we know that God is calling him, and we know that that this is a real step of faith, and we want to be with him in that and we want to encourage him and build him up in every way that we can as he steps out.

Prayer *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Well, would you join me as we pray. Like, God, we just want to say thank you for the privilege that it is to be your people. Lord, we want to say thank you, that we get to be a church where Jesus, you raise people up. You call them to yourself in faith in you and Lord God, where you tap some on the shoulders to go into mission and ministry work. And Lord God, we just want to thank you that we get to participate with you as you build your kingdom. And so, Jesus, we just pray blessing over Ben and as he takes this step of faith. We pray blessing over Matt* in the new roles that he'll be taking up in Ben's stead as well.

Lord, we want to say thank you. Lord God, I want to thank you for each of the ways that we get to participate in your kingdom as well. But I thank you for the places where you send each of us through the week and we want to lift those places to you as well. Lord, perhaps it's family, perhaps it's work or relationships with school parents or sporting areas or Lord, wherever it might be.

We just want to pray for the relationships that we have in those places. Jesus, would you lead us? Would you fill us by your spirit and prompt us with timely words, timely actions? Lord, would you fill us with your love that we might be just really clear and visible representatives of you in those places? And Lord God, we want to pray that you will be drawing people to yourself in those places, raising up people of peace. People who will warm to what they experience of you through us. Lord God, we want to pray that we would have opportunities to share further of what a blessing faith in you is, of how significant Jesus having a relationship with you is, how transformative it is for us. Lord, may we have the joy of sharing that with others.

May we have the joy of inviting them to explore who you are in the Bible. And so, Lord, we lift all of that to you as we come into Easter. I'm just so conscious Jesus that you died because you so loved the world. And Lord God, I want to pray that you would open our eyes to see the world around us, to have your heart for our world, God, that we would love them as you do, and Jesus, that we might see people come to saving faith in you. So we bless you, Lord God. We want to pray today for those who are unwell among us, and God we just want to lift all who might be struggling with physical health, emotional health. Jesus, you know the needs of each one, the stresses and the stretch places. We want to ask Holy Spirit, would you come and would you bring healing power to those who are down, those who are struggling?

We pray, Lord God, for your sustaining strength and your grace and your kindness for those who are who are unwell, those who are weary, Lord, would you come. And would you strengthen our inner being that we might keep our eyes fixed on you and keep walking faithfully with you? We bless you. Amen.

Bible Reading: John 13:1-17 (NSRV)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Sermon: We see Jesus for Who He Is *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Parramatta Baptist Church. If you're new here or have forgotten who I am, my name is Steve. I am one of the pastors here. We are week two in a series where we're looking at some of the tables that are part of the story. It's part of a broader series. Throughout the course of this year, we'll be looking at being at the table with Jesus, being at the table with one another, but also inviting others to the table.

And this morning, we stay with this theme of actually being at the table with Jesus, looking at this story as part of the Easter story. The table is a place where we can get to know others, and by its physicality, a table actually connects us to the others. At a table, it invites us to share a meal or a coffee and doing so invites us to know the other. I was thinking back to when we started here, and I actually can remember the tables that we sat around.

Some of you would know Phil* and Bella*. They were the first people from the church who invited us over on a Sunday for lunch with their family, and we sat around their family table. We I still remember that day and I remember that their daughter, Emily*, who was eight at the time, didn't like soup. She wouldn't have her soup. And I remember our second meal. It was a Saturday night. We were about to go out to Youth Live with our youth group, and Tim* and Rebecca* invited us over to their family table and I remember that their daughter Jess* made the potato bake.

You see, there's something about a table that connects us to other people, and we remember that. And that connection remains.

Now, mostly we choose who we share a table with. We choose who we are going to connect with. Though sometimes, such as at a wedding, we are at the mercy of others. You know that feeling of, 'I wonder who we're going to be sitting with?' Yeah, yeah, yeah. We shouldn't do that. But we do. Kathy and I, late last year, we had the opportunity to be part of a dinner. We didn't know anyone else at dinner, but we wanted to go and there was only 30 people at the table. They put us on rows of tables. And so where we were sitting, there was really probably only another four people that we could connect with, but we were quite close.

The table was only that wide. And so we had these people across from us and we don't get to choose who we sit with, right? Somebody else chose this for us anyway. There was the six of us in this corner of the table, and so we went through who we were, our names and whatever, and we have this guy, I'll call him Ricky*.

He came from the United States from out of the Midwest. And he said, "My name's Ricky (not his real name). And I am renouncing everything to do with my past."

He said, "At the moment I am renouncing my American citizenship." And he said, "and it's a very hard thing to do once you're an American citizen, it's really hard not to become one. And so it's costing," he said, "it's costing me a lot of money, but I no longer want to be identified as American."

I think to myself, 'well, you're not going to lose the accent.' So anyway, but he said, "I'm renouncing my American citizenship. I am severing my contacts with my American family."

I didn't believe that political divides actually separate families like that's—it's a real thing. "And he said, I'm also renouncing everything to do with my Baptist upbringing."

And Kathy and I looked at each other and thought, 'this is going to be an awkward dinner,' because we hadn't said what we were. And can I just say, it was awkward. But I think by the end of the night, I'd won him over.

Sometimes we are at the mercy of others, and I guess mostly what is shared at a table in conversation is helpful. Sometimes not, but mostly what is shared is helpful. It connects us, it creates bonds, and we come to understand one another that little bit more.

Well, Jesus and his disciples have been together for about three years. They had watched him, listened to him. They'd served with him, healed in his name, spoken to others about him. The disciples would have said that they knew Jesus. And in some way that was true. Yet when we get to this story, the reality is that they still did not grasp what was awaiting Jesus. Their Lord and master Jesus had spoken to them on multiple occasions about His death, but the concept of Jesus dying was so outside the disciples' way of thinking. It just did not sink in for them.

Jesus was the Messiah and He would reign in victory, so they could not grasp that His victory would be by his death on the cross. And so what Jesus does at this table would shake them and even shock them. And that was intentional. John starts his account by making it very clear that Jesus knew exactly what would happen. Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Jesus knew that God had put all things under his power. Jesus knew that He had come from God and was returning to God. And it was because Jesus knew these things, knew who He was, knew the purpose for which he had come and knew where he was going.

As this evening meal progresses, Jesus gets up from the meal and takes off his outer clothing – that would have been a little awkward. He wraps a towel around his waist, (it gets more awkward), he pours water into vase, goes into a basin, and begins to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with a towel.

It is an act that stuns the disciples into an embarrassed silence. Can you just imagine what is happening around that table? Not a word. You see what Jesus has done, what their Lord and master has done, is to adopt the posture of a slave, not just a servant, but the most menial of slaves. It was

a degrading and lowly job, and this is what Jesus did, moving from disciple to disciple, washing and drying their feet.

Now, as you may imagine, Peter does not cope well with embarrassed silences, and so he breaks it. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" And he knows the answer. Jesus knows that He knows the answer.

So, Jesus simply replies, "You do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand."

"No, no," says Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Imagine all the disciples were nodding and Jesus answers, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." And to Peter, that's not an option. Then he says, "then just not my feet, but my hands and my head as well."

You see, Peter does not understand. "You do not realize now what I'm doing. But later you will understand," said Jesus.

Peter does not understand. Neither Peter nor any of the disciples understand that Jesus Christ will go to the cross. They do not understand that what Jesus is doing now around this table is symbolic of what He will do at the cross, because at the cross he will humble himself not just to the point of serving as a manual slave, but he will humble himself to the point of death.

Now, at the table, the disciples are shocked, but not as shocked as they will be by Jesus' crucifixion on the cross. What Jesus does by washing their feet points them to the cross and it points them to the meaning the cross.

When we look at the other gospels in Matthew and Mark and Luke, we read about how Jesus took bread and broke it and said, "this is my body broken for you." Then he took a cup, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the sins of many," in Matthew, Mark and Luke around the table through the symbols of the bread and wine.

Jesus is pointing to what he was about to do through his death on the cross in the Gospel of John. John says nothing of the bread and the wine, but instead he includes this story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples.

And by doing so, John is inviting us to see Jesus for who He is. And just as the bread and the cup reveal to us the significance of Jesus' death on the cross, so Jesus washing his disciples' feet reveals that this is not just an example of humble service that we are to follow. It is that. But it is more than that. This act at the table reveals to us who Jesus is and the purpose for which He came and died for us.

There are three things that I just want to draw out from this story of what John is wanting us to say. The first is that Jesus knowingly and willingly goes to the cross.

He goes there to experience death so that we might be forgiven of our sin. Now, I don't care how good a person you think you are. The Bible makes it very clear that none of us, by our own goodness, can stand before God. We can't make ourselves spiritually clean. But Jesus Christ can. And He does. This is at the very core of the Gospel.

The good news that Jesus lived a perfect life in word, in deed, in thought. He did not deserve death in any way, but he chose death so that by his death all of our sin would be paid for. It would be covered over. This is the good news, because this is what grace is. It is God's undeserved favor upon us and the life we now live and the promise that we now have of eternal life.

It is all a gift to us from God through Jesus Christ. Jesus knowingly and willingly goes to the cross to experience death. As Jesus is washing their feet, what is every disciple thinking? They may be thinking different things, but I think there is one thing that would be common to them all, and that is, 'Lord, you should not be doing this to me. You should not be washing our feet. I don't deserve this.' But it is only Peter who verbalises that when he says "No, you shall never wash my feet. You shall not wash my feet." And they are right. They don't deserve it. But that's the point. We don't deserve grace because grace is undeserved. We don't deserve forgiveness. Forgiveness is given to us because of Christ. Jesus humbles himself and in the washing of their feet, he points to the cross where the ultimate washing of us takes place.

The second thing that John intends for us to see is the nature of Jesus' unconditional love for us. There are so many scriptures that speak of the extent of God's love for us in Jesus Christ, many of them written by the apostle John.

Look in his letters, he speaks over and over again of the love of God in Christ for us. But in John 3, "for God so love the world that He gave us His son. Whoever believes finds life." Jesus' words from John 15, Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this. To lay down one's life for one's friends," just as He is about to do that.

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus makes it very clear that the extent of God's love and the reflection of that from us is not limited to those who have family or friends or people who love us. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus says, "But I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, love your enemies."

What about Judas? The judiciary's feet washed. What do you think? Yes or no? Do you think Jesus just hopped around him, glared at him, maybe called him something, told him he doesn't know

Judas was at the table. Judas' heart and mind had already been set on the betrayal of Jesus. It had been arranged and ready.

Judas was there at the table. And what is Judas thinking as Jesus washes his feet? We don't know. Was Judas overcome with a sense of remorse and doubt for his betrayal of Jesus? Did he wonder whether he'd done the right thing wishing desperately that he hadn't betrayed His Lord? Possibly. Or was by that stage Judas so hardened that all he could do is see Jesus at of washing feet as proving him right, that Jesus was weak, that he was a fraud. Why? How would a messiah really do this? But then there's the other question. What was Jesus thinking as he watched Judas feet? I don't think Jesus mumbled something under his breath. I don't think Jesus resented him. I think at that point, as he washed Judas' feet, the heart of Jesus must have been broken just with a sense of grief and sorrow at what had taken place.

But he washed his feet nonetheless, and he did so with love. What does unconditional love look like? It looks like that. It looks like Jesus washing the feet of Judas. But this is God's love for us in Christ. Unconditional, undeserved, but given freely to us.

The third thing that comes out of this passage that John includes in his gospel is this that Jesus expects us to live like he does.

As he says, "no servant is greater than their master." It's not just a just the knowing of Jesus, knowing his words or knowing what he's done, that we are called to. We are called to a response, a response of imitation of him. What does that mean? On the first Sunday of every month when we break the bread and share the cup, we should also then take our shoes and socks off and wash each other's feet. Maybe. Possibly. But I'm not sure that's what Jesus was asking of us to do. He was calling us to live with a deep humility. He was calling us to live with a deep love for all people and a serving of one another, loving and serving even those who oppose us and hate us.

This is what John wants us to understand and step into, to see intentionally. Jesus knowingly and willingly going to the cross for our forgiveness. The unconditional nature of the love of God for us. But then this response that is upon us, our response that we are called to. Do you, like anybody here, know any of the old hymns? Enjoy any of the old hymns? Well, let's go back more than just, you know, 100, 200, 300 years.

The first Christian song that we are aware of that's been written down comes out of Philippians 2. And there there's a part of this song or maybe the entirety of the song that Paul quotes in Philippians 2:5. He starts by saying, "In your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus," and then he quotes these words that would have been sung or chanted in the earliest of the Christian churches and referring to Jesus.

This is what they say, "who being in very nature God. did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made a human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even on a cross."

It can't be put any better. This is Jesus. This is the person who washed the feet of the disciples around that table. This table experience was deeply confronting, and it was deeply uncomfortable for Jesus' disciples, as should the cross be for us. There is a sense in which we should feel uncomfortable, confronted by the depth of our own sin.

That meant that Jesus had to die for us in our place. But as well as being confronting and uncomfortable, it should also speak great comfort to us because it speaks of the unfailing and the unconditional love that God has for you and for me. And it speaks of the invitation that is given to all, even to those who have ignored and rejected him, the invitation to allow Christ to wash us clean, not just our feet, but to actually wash every part of us clean through the forgiveness that he has won at the cross.

Post-Sermon Prayer *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Let me pray. Father, we thank you that your love for us and for all people is seen most dramatically and most fully the cross. We see it in the life of Jesus Christ, the way that he lived. But we see it in his resolve to go to the cross so that by his death we have life.

Father, may we identify with him, not just admire him or know his words, but Lord, may we identify with him and seek to follow him and imitate him in every aspect of our lives. And Lord, may we indeed be those who love and serve others with a deep humility as well. Father, we thank you for your words inspired by the Holy Spirit. May your Holy Spirit be planted deeply within us today that we would be those who not only listen, but those who do, who respond to your leading to your word for your glory.

Lord, we ask this in your name, Amen.

Post-Sermon Wrap-Up *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

So much of this invitation to the table, like so much of our willingness to be fully present at a table, depends on how comfortable we feel in that place with the people that we're with. And I was really conscious as Steve speaks from John 13, like we just get this beautiful picture of who we're at the table with when it comes to Jesus, of one who just loves so, so unconditionally, of one who is just so gracious.

Doesn't matter what our past is or even what our broken choices might be going forward, that he loves us right in that moment, loves us as we are. And so as we come to finish the service today, I want to invite you to into an experience. And it's an opportunity to come and be with Jesus, who we've just spoken to like this, this very safe table that we get to be at an opportunity to come into his presence and to meet with him.

And so this is this is going to be a led meditative exercise, and it's going to be led by a man called Strahan Coleman, who's a New Zealander and someone that I've been reading and really gaining a lot from. In this video, he's going to invite us into a place of stillness to meet with God. And you'll notice in this video that he mentions a 'divine hongī', a hugging thing in New Zealand. A hongī is simply when Maori greet one another and they do so in a really intimate way with their noses touching and it's actually a place of intimacy, and an exchange of breath is a sign of oneness among them. And so when Strahan refers to a divine hongī, he's actually talking about that place of intimacy with God, where we meet with God and He breathes his life in us. So he's inviting us into a place fully in God's presence. And as you come into God's presence, I just want to encourage each of us that his presence is very, very safe. This is the place of being at the table with Jesus that we've just spoken about. I want to be at the table with one who loves us, who would give all to be in relationship with us. So I encourage you to close your eyes as we're led through this activity.

Video Meditation Exercise *Speaker: Strahan Coleman, recording*

The goal of this exercise is to get right down into the deep. So it kind of starts with some imaginary and imaginative prayer, engaging our faith and existing to God. But really what it's about is just meeting with God in our souls. It comes down into us through the body, sort of calms our bodies down and then opens up.

So this might take around 7 minutes, 8 minutes. Wherever you're sitting right now, I just invite you to make yourself comfortable for me.

I like to open my palms up on my knees. I recently found out that lawyers get people on the witness stand to open their palms on their knees because people are more honest when their hands are like that. Isn't that interesting? So if you like, put your hands up on your knees like that and just close your eyes, get into a comfortable position and I'm just going to lead us into this free time.

So just as you're doing that, just take a few deep breaths into your stomach. When you're taking a deep breath, you want to sort of feel it right in your lower back, right down to your gut. It's breathing the divine hongji, the life of God deep into you. It breathes so much more than just oxygen. It is the gift of God as the presence of God.

And just with all the distractions around, just feel where you are. Feel the weight of your body. If you feel heavy, light or anxious, or just tired and sore, just acknowledge it. This is where God is right now. Since your mind wanders, just refocus on your breath and just slow down out of the noise into the stillness.

As you're sitting there, just locate in your body where you feel your deepest part of you. This is what the psalmists call soul, and when deep calls to deep, where is the deep of you? Is it in your chest, in your stomach? Just focus on where your soul lurks and just sit there in your deepest place.

As you're sitting there. Just notice what's going on. Do you feel joyful, burdened, heavy, is there worry there? Imagine that in that soul, just everything, all of you—past, present, future, nothing hidden. What you love, what you hate, what you're scared of, what you celebrate. And just imagine that sitting over that part of you is a door. A window, like opening French doors outward, and they close. And the French doors just kind of represent your consent to God, a willingness to open up and just feel the weight of your soul in there.

This is your truest, deepest place, all of you. Your deepest cries and longings for God, your fears, your life. And if or when you feel ready to, just imagine opening that up to God, opening it up and just saying, 'Here is all of me.' As you do, see God's loving eyes. The God of Galatians 5—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness.

Just seeing it all. His light, piercing through, the smile on his face, love in his heart and just receive his love. Look to him from that deep part of your soul, not with your mind, but with the emotions of your soul. Just receiving goodness and kindness and love. What does God say to you? What does God do? Just before we finish, take a moment to thank God being with you, whether you felt something or not saw something or not. Just thank God for being with you.

Jesus, you are calling your church to an intimacy maybe never seen on this earth in history. You are deepening us, we say yes, you're beautiful and worthy of our loving gaze to our last breath. We ache for you, like the Psalmist says our souls thirst for you. We love your presence. Awaken your church now God to your presence, your unceasing real presence. Make us the people of this table, the miraculous power of God in the world.

We love you. We implore you. Come Jesus, return to us. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Conclusion *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

That's how we're going to finish today. But, you know, if there's something in there that's been meaningful for you, by all means take time just to sit. Don't hurry out of that place of being with Jesus.

If you would like prayer, there will be some prayer teams down the front here. And we would love to pray with you into anything that God might be just touching in your life, or perhaps a longing that you have for seeing him at work in a situation through you as well. Otherwise, I do want to encourage you to be relationally committed before you have to leave today.

And yeah, just take time to be with one another to meet those perhaps you don't meet, to welcome those who are new among us as well. But bless you and have a lovely week.

Online Outro *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Hey, thank you for joining us online today. We pray that you have been blessed and encouraged. And if there is something from today that you would like us to pray into with you, don't hesitate to let us know.

If we haven't met you, we'd love to hear from you. And you also welcome to come and join us in person as well. To know more about our church, please go to our church website and you can also find more details about who we are through our newsletter. And you can subscribe to that through our website as well.

God bless you and may you have a great week.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*