

Service Overview

Speaker: Stephen Bates

Sermon Series: At The Table With One Another

Message: Choosing a Posture of Serving

Scripture Reference: Luke 22:14-27

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Service Welcome *Speaker: Worship Team*

Good morning. Welcome to church. Come on in. Take a seat. This is a good day to be here, to be able to worship God together. Thanks for coming.

I just wanted to share a little picture vision daydream that I had with Jesus recently, and then I'm going to pray, and then we're going to sing. So let me read what I what I saw. First, I heard a noise. I heard a shuffling sound in the corridors. It's the end of the day, like at busy publisher or in a newsroom. When the deadline is fast approaching, there's a hush of focused individuals hurrying about on important tasks.

There's no more distractions, no time to waste. There is a need to let go of the things we thought would be nice. Some things that seemed worth pursuing at the beginning of the day. They now fall to the cutting room floor. They're no longer needed. Focus has become crystal clear. We're only doing the high priority tasks now. And I feel like the Lord is saying that. He's raising the alarm. He's sounding the alarm. He's reminding us he is coming back, and we must get ready. Jesus says in Luke 12:40, you also must be ready. The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

To think we have limitless time is a comfort we can't afford. It's time to pursue the things of the kingdom. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you. That's Matthew 6: 33. He's calling us now to let some things fall to the cutting room floor, to surrender things that, although useful at some point, have now become redundant and are no longer on the father's agenda.

We have nothing to lose. It's time to focus. So when we're in an environment where there's a pressing deadline, we don't have time to pursue the things that don't matter. And that's what I feel like the Lord is doing right now, he's reminding us we need to be ready. We need to pursue the things that matter.

And those are the things of the kingdom, things that are eternal. So the fact that you're here shows that you're prioritising the things of the kingdom. And we also speak that to the people who are watching online whenever they watch. Pursue after the things that matter. It's the time to pay attention to what he's what he's calling you to do. Because I need you to do what he's asking you to do. You need me to be doing what he's asking me to do.

Lord, we thank you that you call us. We thank you that you have prepared works in advance for us to do. We thank you that you have a plan, a purpose for each one of us, and that we are all critical in this kingdom. We are all critical, critical components. There's not one of us who doesn't have something to do for you, Jesus. So, Lord, you help us to focus, to get crystal clear laser focus, on the things that you're calling us to do.

Worship Singing

Song: Unto Your Name by Ben Smith, Pat Barrett

Song: King Of My Heart by John Mark McMillan, Sarah McMillan

Song: I Surrender All by Chat Robert Cates, John Wheeler Van DeVenter, Tony Wood, Winfield Scott Weeden

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Ben*

And so, Heavenly Father, together we posture ourselves in surrender before you. You are worthy of all that we have. And, Lord, we thank you that you are a refuge, strong in every season. And your goodness and your grace and your love abounds in every moment of our lives. Thank you, Lord, that we can come to you, that we can enter your presence because of what Jesus has done, and we have the privilege of worshiping and praising you.

We invite you to be at work this morning, Lord, forming us into the likeness of Christ. Come and have your way in Jesus' name, amen.

Arise Camp Recap *Speaker: Ben*

Good morning. Welcome to church. My name is Ben, and I'm one of the pastors here. And in my role, one of the key ministry areas I oversee is our youth ministry, which is such a joy. But I wanted to come and share with you before our young people go out about what happened last weekend. Because last weekend we went away on our annual Arise Youth Camp. And when our young people go out, we're going to show you a little video highlight reel of some stuff that went down on the weekend.

We took away just over 90 teenagers on our on our youth camp, and even before we went on camp, we actually overbooked the site. Whoops! And we took like 118 people. So we were like 8 people over the size that we should have been, and thankfully, the campsite was very generous in finding us some extra houses to kind of sleep a few of us small groups.

But leading into youth camp, I came in, I shared that it was coming up. and with the registrations coming in, there actually was this really fun expectation and anticipation for what was going to actually happen across the weekend. And throughout the weekend, I feel like it sustained. We did lots of fun things. We threw chalk powder at each other and we did a whole lot of dress ups.

We had loads of fun, but we also went away with the mission of sharing Jesus, and so we just unpacked the gospel in a really simple way. We looked at how Jesus declares he's the light of the world, and how the light came into the world, into places of darkness and darkness did not overcome him. And on one of the nights, we invited kids to respond to the gospel, and we had a space where people could kind of put up their name to symbolise they wanted to give their life to Jesus.

And two people put their names up there. What did it mean for them? I'm not sure. The small group leaders would know, they're the ones who were discipling them relationally, and so we're going to continue to work that out with them. And then for the rest of the people in the room, who actually had a relationship with Jesus, the invitation was to actually return to the cross.

It was to bring ourselves again to the feet of Jesus and to bring things that maybe are broken but that we just want his restoration into, things that are hurt that we actually need healing into, places of darkness that we want his light to flood in. That seem to be a really significant place for a bunch of our young people as well.

And so the weekend as a whole was a win. it was lots of fun. We also saw God moving in loads of ways as I reflected on it. I feel like this camp was really a moment of stoking the flames, because I feel like this year God has been doing some really exciting stuff in our youth ministry, just in general.

We've baptized so many young people already this year, and camp was one of those stoking the flames moment. So we had young people coming up and saying they want to get baptised as well. Like, it's something really powerful that hearing the testimony and the declaration and the commitment of other young people inspires the rest, and we're seeing that just spread like wildfire. So we're baptising a bunch next week, and a bunch the week after. We just see so many young people wanting to get baptised, and just declare that commitment of their life to Jesus.

Another fun one, which we saw like a stoking of flames, is the leaders are reading the Bible with the young people. like young people are actually coming up and saying, "I want to read the Bible." So the leaders are turning right and going, "all right, let's catch up and do it." So I've been reading the Bible with some of my boys for the last few weeks, and I know a few groups about to actually start doing it next week or the week after.

So there was some really exciting discipling in really catalytic places, and it was a massive win of a weekend. It's exciting to see that it's actually flowing out in really healthy and exciting ways. So I wanted to come to you, knowing that most of you didn't come, and say it was a win. Thank you for everything that you did to support us. Thank you for those who actually gave money and paid for people to come on camp, that was a really practical, element of blessing for those people. Also, thank you for your prayers, because we did see God work in profound ways. Thank you for those who just interceded for our leaders, and for our young people across the weekend.

I think it was probably one of the youth camps that went without a hitch, apart from those little things that obviously go wrong, but most of it largely went without a hitch. And just praising God for his blessing over that. So thank you so much for your prayer and intercession into that space.

--- Break as a video showing a summary of Arise Youth Camp is played ---

Ben Induction *Speaker: Stephen & Kathy Bates, talking to Ben*

Don't you wish you were young again? It's so fabulous to hear what God is doing among our young people, isn't it? And to see those memories being made, but also those significant steps in growing in relationship with Jesus.

I want to invite Ben and Lauren* Steve up, because today, we want to take a few minutes to publicly affirm Ben in his role as one of our pastors at PBC. Now, normally, you induct a pastor when they're new to their role, and Ben is certainly not new. But the way that your path into ministry unfolded at Parramatta Baptist, kind of meant that you never formally got inducted into your role. So today we want to publicly affirm you in it.

So let me explain how this this path unfolded. In 2018, our previous youth pastor, Kara*, having worked with Ben as a youth leader, as she stepped out on maternity leave, she recommended that Ben step in in the role of interim youth pastor. And you did such an amazing job that we kept you on the pastoral team ever since that time.

For a time, that has meant that you have played different interim roles on our pastoral team. Over those 6 years, you have graciously taken up a few different ministry areas, and we want to say thank you for your flexibility in that.

Today, though, we want to affirm you in your role as a full-time associate pastor at Parramatta Baptist. We want to affirm your love for God and also for his church, and particularly right now for his church here at PBC.

Ben, you are gifted as a leader and in raising up leaders, as we have seen and heard this morning. You see the big picture and you develop processes that enable ministry to grow, you see possibilities for the future, and you are able to develop strategy to get there. You are committed to making disciples yourself. But as we have heard once again, you are also committed to raising up leaders who also make disciples. You are also gifted in worship, and you lead us into God's presence with sensitivity and with skill in this place.

And you are gifted in preaching and teaching. And with Reuben joining the pastoral team this year and the other Ben taking a role in another church, you have once again had some adjustments to your role this year. So you are now overseeing the youth ministry as well as young adult ministry as well as our evening service. Don't have that surprised look on your face, because I know you know he's all over this. And we've actually been talking about this additional role of young adult ministry over a period of time now. But all of these roles you're handling whilst you're all also still completing your theological studies.

Now, for those who may not have met Lauren, yes, Ben and Lauren were married last year and Lauren, we love that you share Ben's heart for God and also for his church as well. You are a leader in your own right, leading youth ministry and also leading crew camps. We love your heart for those who haven't yet heard of Jesus, we love that you love ministry in schools and in places where you get to share Jesus.

We love the way that you come alongside people and watch you Sunday by Sunday go out of your way to talk to others, to include them in this place. And I'm very conscious, as we do this table series, that the two of you love to gather people around your table, to really build meaningful relationships and to spur them on, to keep following Jesus as well.

So we want to bless you both, we want to affirm you both in the roles that you do play at PBC, and we want to pray for you together. So what we'd love to do is, get you down the front here and any who would like to come and lay hands on them and pray. I invite everyone to stand and for any who would like to, to come and to lay hands on Ben and Lauren as we just pray God's blessing, we pray a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, that he would continue to use these two in powerful ways.

--- Break as members of the congregation, along with Kathy and Stephen, lay hands on Ben and Lauren and pray for them ---

Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events *Speaker: Reuben*

Hi, I'm Reuben, and God's been doing so much at PBC, if you haven't noticed, but you guys know that God's doing stuff in our church. If you want to get involved in what God is doing in the life of this church, this announcement is for you. We've got a new roster coming up for serving in July, so for those who are not serving yet, this is your chance to jump on a new roster. We start a new term, and for those who are already serving, there will be a survey form in the foyer and a QR code in the newsletter for you to let us know your unavailability is.

Also, one ministry that we really want to highlight is the Park ministry. It's not seen on a Sunday, but, if you were to count the number of lives that have been impacted over the years, I think it would be really amazing to know that. So, to get involved, have a chat with Simon, who is right at the back. He's in a green jumper. I think that's an area of need.

Some other areas of need include the computer projection. The tech team and the music team are quite visible, but there's so many other areas like gardening, cleaning and baking that really happen behind the scenes. If you do get involved, and you'll really see and really connect with people as well. That's a great way to know people.

The next thing is that worship night is happening on the 12th of June at 7:30PM. And, as a church, we really want to seek God together and really devote time to just worshipping him in spirit and in truth, because he's worthy. We don't worship him because he gives us things. He just first and foremost deserves to be worshiped. And so, in Revelation 5:8, it talks about the living creatures and the elders all falling face down before the throne, worshipping him. And so our theme for this upcoming worship night is the harp and the bowl. The harp represents our praise and our worship, and the bowl represents the prayers of the saints that we bring before him. So it's really going to be a time of seeking him. Worship is our main weapon of warfare. And so, let's come together and really seek God together.

Another way to get involved is baptisms. We've had 20 baptisms since the beginning of this year, and that's something. Many young people have been baptised this year, so this is your chance if you haven't been baptised. Do speak to one of the pastoral team and make this public declaration of faith.

Bible Reading: Luke 22:14-27 (NIV UK)

14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.'

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.[a] 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!' 23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

Sermon: At The Table: Choosing a Posture of Serving *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

Good morning everyone. Welcome to Parramatta Baptist Church and welcome also for those who are watching us and engaging with us online as well. It's great to have you here with us. My name is Steve, I'm one of the pastors here, and at the moment we're week 2 in what's been a series that has run throughout the year around the theme of the table. It's about being at the table over Easter. We talked about being at the table with Jesus, and we looked at some passages around that.

Now, we've begun a new part of the series about being at the table with one another. I feel like the way the services have played out, they've just reminded me of that connection that we have with one another, the way in which we engage with one, are able to pray for one another. It also reminded me of Ben and Hannah's wedding at a table together, and it reflects who they are and that inclusiveness. And we want all of our people to actually celebrate this day with us. It is a beautiful day.

What Colleen spoke about last week is that eating around a table does join us together. There is something about sharing a meal with family or with friends, and it's an important part of our connection with one another. Now our lifestyle, I understand, works against that. Often we feel like we don't have time to actually sit around a table with other people.

Who's got time for that, you know? It's just grab some food, put it in your mouth and get out the door again to your next appointment, your next meeting, or dropping the kids somewhere or picking them up. But the fact remains, even in the rush of life, we eat with those we love, don't we? We eat with those we love, and we continue in the rush of life to celebrate, to pause and to celebrate around a table at weddings, or our birthdays, or our anniversaries. It's what we do, because this image of table speaks of connection and it speaks of connection with one another.

So, father, as we come to this passage and as we continue to reflect on what it means to be at the table with one another, Lord, we ask that Your Holy Spirit would speak to each one of us deeply. We pray that you would encourage us in the people that you are shaping us to be. We pray that you would challenge us in those areas of our lives that don't align with that. So, father, may your word speak to us. May your spirit prompt us, and may our own hearts and our own minds be responsive and attentive to what you're going to speak to us about this morning. In Christ's name, we ask this, amen.

So the passage that was just read to us is set in the Passover. We're told that the hour has come for Jesus, and he will suffer and die for his disciples and for us. Jesus says to his disciples around the table that he's eagerly desired to share this meal with them, but they probably don't grasp some of the words that follow from that, because he talks about, "I'm not going to share this meal. I'm not going to partake of this again until I do it again with you, when the kingdom is fulfilled." That would not have made sense to them. But what Jesus is making very clear to them is that his death, that is just upon him, is not the end. Death will not be the end of him. He will eat and drink again with his disciples, and his kingdom will come, and his kingdom will find fulfillment.

And so as we read this, for Jesus, the Passover meal and this Passover meal in particular, was not just a reflection or thanksgiving for what God had done in the past, but it speaks into what God is about to do now, in the future, in his future. And beyond that, Jesus looks to the future in which we experience the fulfillment of the kingdom, the time when we will remember all that he did.

And Jesus instructs them, and he instructs us, to keep sharing this meal together, to remember what he has done in dying for us. As we read through this passage, we're meant to see a contrast, because what Jesus is speaking about is his self-giving. "My body given for you, my blood poured out for you." These are words of self-giving. "I will die for you."

But there are two things that follow immediately in this passage. The first is this: Jesus says, "but one of you is going to betray me." And so the self-giving love of Jesus is met firstly with betrayal. But the contrast then takes another step, because we're told that the self-giving love of Jesus is also met with an argument. Now, I'm sure no arguments ever occur at your dining room table, right? Of course they do. But there's something just so wrong about this one, because Jesus is talking about his self-giving in love. And there's this argument as to which of the disciples is going to be considered the greatest. You can see just how obtuse that is, how like, it's just so wrong, right?

The table is a place of connection, but in that culture, a table was also a place where your status is on display. And in that culture where you sat at the table reflected your status. The best seat would be for the head of the family, or it would be the head of that group, or it would be a guest of honour, and then others would be seated according to their status, and they would be seated in relation to that top person.

And the less important, the lower the status, the further away you are. Now, we would like to think that we still do that in these days, but we kind of do in one context - it's at a wedding, right? Because at a wedding you've got the guest of honour, the bride and the groom, and closest to them, they're very bestest of friends and family. And so they get closer, and then you have the tables and the family, or the at least the family that are loved. Like, there's always the embarrassing uncle who drinks too much, right? And you want him as far away as possible, right. Generally, there's the family that's closest, and then you can kind of tell where you are.

At a wedding, you actually realise where you sit in the pecking order by where you sit physically. If we can understand that, then we understand what's going on here at the table, because the disciples are jockeying for the best seats.

But there's another group of people who are at a wedding as well. And who are they? Those who don't get a seat. Yeah, those who serve. And at a wedding we can just ignore them, can't we? They kind of come and they fill up our wine glasses. They put food and they take our food away. They go away and they leave and go to another place where we don't see what they do. They clean up for us. They've set up for us. You see, they're the ones who serve.

Going back to Jesus' day, often the highest status would go from the oldest down to the youngest. But Jesus reverses that, and speaking to his disciples, says the greatest should be like the youngest. He's not saying the greatest is the youngest. Mean, if you're young, don't think you're the greatest, right? But he's saying the greatest should be like the youngest, who is generally regarded as the

least. And at this Passover, Jesus would have been seen as the greatest. He would have had the seat of honour. So the argument taking place would have been about who gets to sit closest to him, who's going to sit at his right, who's going to sit at his left. And Jesus rebukes them. He says, "you know, kings and rulers might care about such things, but you are not to be like that." I love that. "You are not to be like that."

Those with wealth, who buy their status, who buy political power, they called themselves benefactors. They would give money to people in order for those people to give them honour. "They might care about such things," says Jesus, "but you are not to be like that. Instead," he says, "the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table, or the one who serves?"

Obviously, the one who is at the table. But in this upside down kingdom of God, Jesus says, "I am among you as one who serves." Take it back to the waiting room. Jesus is not sitting up there with the bridegroom. He's not even sitting at the family table. He's not even up the back with the uncle who's had too much to drink and is being loud. Jesus is the one at the wedding serving. That's the role he takes.

What Jesus is telling us, as he needed to tell his disciples, is don't be concerned about your position. Don't be concerned about your status. Don't be concerned around where you sit at the table. Be concerned instead by your posture, the posture that you take at the table. In the Gospel of John, John records Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. You may know that story, and it's a passage I spoke on just before Easter around the table. Jesus serves his disciples by doing the tasks that none of them would do. He takes the role of the lowly servant, and he washes their feet. The King of Kings, the creator of all things, God's Messiah, takes the role of a lowly servant.

And he says to them, "do you understand what I have done for you? You call me teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done," for you see, Jesus' posture at the table was as a servant. He had no interest in status. He had no interest in honour. Yes, he was the Lord and he would be their savior. But his interest was not for himself. It was to do the will of the father in giving himself for the sake of others and as followers of Jesus, this is to be our posture at the table as well, as one who serves.

Later on, Peter, who was at the table, hearing these words, would write these things in 1 Peter. Chapter 4 says, "the end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind, so that you might pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so

with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the power and the glory, glory, and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Jesus modelled what it meant to live as one who serves, and his disciples and the church followed his example. They adopted this same posture of servanthood. And when we read through these passages, when we look at the life of Christ, the posture that Jesus takes as a servant is marked by three things.

And the first one is so obvious. I feel like every time I speak about Jesus, I need to talk about his humility. It is perhaps the greatest attribute that we are to follow. His posture was marked firstly by his humility. Greatness for Jesus was not found in strength and wealth. Greatness is found in being attentive to the needs of others. The Apostle Paul in Philippians 2, in capturing the words of what would have been one of the earliest hymns & liturgies spoken by Christians, he says, “is that our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

Now I am not Jesus Christ and you are not Jesus Christ, but our attitude is to be the same as his attitude. And what does this mean? It means that no service, no act of serving, is too lowly for me or for you. And it also means that there is no person who is unworthy of being served by me or by you. And God forbid, have you ever had the thought, you know, “my time and my talents and my gifts are being wasted doing what I do.” I think sometimes we can buy into that. Or perhaps, God forbid even more, have you ever thought, “well, that person, I don't think it's a good use of my talents and my gifts and my time to invest into that person, because somebody else can do that.”

You see, there's a humility that comes in the way in which Jesus served. Jesus saw people in a way that we struggled to, and he stopped for people that we are so intent on just running past, because we're so busy. Jesus saw and he stopped for the people that others walked by, and so should we. We live in an age that gives honour to the wealthy, to the beautiful, to the powerful, and unfortunately, even to the bully. But in the kingdom of God, that gets turned upside down because the kingdom honours those who serve and serve with humility.

The posture that Jesus took was also one that was marked by dependence, and it should be for us. When we serve, it's not by our own strength, but by God's strength. When we serve with the gifts and the abilities that we have, we understand that they are what God has given to us, not for our benefit, but to build up others and always to be exercised and governed by the law of love.

It means that when we serve with dependence like Jesus did, it's never detached from prayer. Have you ever wondered why Jesus needed to pray? Like surely, he and God so close, it wouldn't even be

necessary. And yet he goes and he spends time in prayer when decisions need to be made where things, such as his death, his impending death.

What does he do? He goes and he spends time with the father. You see, our serving can never be detached from our prayer. It can never be done in our own strength. And whenever we see that God has used us in a way for his glory, then we always give that glory back to him, and we acknowledge it as his work through us, not ours.

And when I look at the posture of servanthood that Jesus took, the third one is faithfulness. This whole “not my will, but yours.” Now, have you discovered that serving others is not always convenient? Sometimes people need something and you're not really in the mood, or you don't really have the availability to do that at the time. And also that it's not always easy. That's the reality that often we face, that serving is not always convenient. It's not always easy. There are times of serving that it feels like a joy, but there are also many times where, as followers of Jesus Christ, you know, we just kind of have to suck it up and go, “not my will, but yours.”

And we have to lay aside and submit our goals, our dreams, our ambitions, our hopes of what a day might have been to the will of God, and to submit them to his Kingdom purposes and trust that he is at work. Jesus served with a faithfulness that we're called to imitate. And so what does faithfulness look like for us? Serving faithfully for us means serving even when it's not seen or appreciated, or even worse, serving and somebody else getting the credit for what you've done. Yeah, faithfulness is seen often in the little things, like simply being there, turning up, turning up on time, staying behind, cleaning up the things that nobody else wants to clean up.

Faithfulness is not quitting when things fail. Many of you would have heard the name William Wilberforce, a UK politician who took a crucial role in the abolition of slavery. It was almost 20 years that he worked in Parliament trying to bring about change. Like we read it in a book like it must have just taken a little while. Almost 20 years he tried and he failed. He tried to convince the Parliament that slavery was just an abomination, that men and women should not be owned and used and abused by others, that the trade of humans was not something that was honouring to God and shouldn't be done by a nation that would call itself, as the UK would, a Christian nation at that time. For 20 years he tried to convince people that what he was saying was right, and it failed, and it failed and it failed and it failed. You know, sometimes we try things and they don't work. Sometimes we take a step into ministry and it feels like, “it just didn't work for me.” And we give it up.

You know, sometimes faithfulness is simply that when you have the conviction of God upon your life to be something or to do something and to serve in some way, you just keep pressing in. It doesn't mean you don't think about why it didn't work. That's an important part of it. But it means you don't give up. It took him almost 20 years, but finally, finally he got it through.

At this point, I just want to thank that there are so many people in this room I have seen serve faithfully over decades. There are people in this room who, decades ago, were instrumental in actually seeing this church begin to grow again. You know the story. Many of you know the story. This church almost died 30 odd years ago. It just wouldn't even take hold again. There are people in this room who worked and didn't give up. They didn't go to other churches where things were better. They stuck with it, believing that this is the place where God had called them to serve. There are people in this room who can tell the stories of the first building. They can tell the stories of this building.

There are people in this room that have put blood, sweat and tears and a lot of cash into what we enjoy today. I've seen other people who stay behind, and they clean up after other people, and when they do it, they do it without grumbling. For example, years ago an accident had taken place in the bathroom, which was an embarrassing situation, but without a word, one guy just cleaned it up and brought dignity to that person who had the accident.

You know, there is so much that goes on that people don't see. They're not seeking to be known. They're not seeking glory or honour in this place. They simply serve. I can tell the story of Wilberforce, but I know a thousand stories in this church. And thank you. You do it really well. There is something about humility, dependence and faithfulness that is really unique to the Christian way of serving.

We see other models of what it means to be serving, don't we? That serving is about being powerful. Serving is about being aggressive. Serving is about being right. I'm not going to mention people, but you can think about people who will talk about serving their country or maybe serving people or serving this, but the way in which it's done, there is no humility, there is no dependence on God, and there is no faithfulness.

Jesus modelled the posture of one who serves. And it is humility, dependence and faithfulness. And whilst we experience different models, such as sovereignty, power and influence, that is not how we serve. When we serve like Jesus, often those we serve will experience the love and the grace of God. Because when we serve with humility, dependence, and faithfulness, the theory of the Christian faith becomes visible. It takes on flesh. It becomes tangible through the humble service of followers of Jesus. You read about the early history of the church in the Roman Empire, and logically you go, how on earth did the church survive? And there is a way, and this is true, we would say, "well, bold preaching and the work of the Holy Spirit." No doubt that is true.

But then when you read historians, they will hasten to add, "it wasn't just the work of the spirit and bold preaching, it was an unselfish devotion to one another and to others, that there was something in the way in which Christians loved each other and served each other, which drew others to the faith."

One episode of that that is often described is actually during the plagues that occurred in the Roman Empire. Now, when a plague would hit a city, if you were wealthy and rich and had influence, you just go out of the city to your summer residence or somewhere else, including the doctors. But what happened in those contexts is that the Christians stayed. Christians stayed in the city. And there were 3 or 4 significant plagues in the Roman Empire where the Christians were known for their showing of mercy. They stayed and they cared for the sick. And there are historians who will write about this and say, that was one of the reasons why Christianity flourished in the Roman Empire. You see, when we serve in the way of Jesus with the posture of Jesus, the love and the grace of God become visible.

Jesus's words again: "the kings of the Gentiles lorded over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. Who is the greater, the one at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who was at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." And the call on us is, as always, to follow Jesus, to follow him.

Post-Sermon Prayer *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

And so, father, we thank you for your love for us and the grace that is given to us in Christ. Thank you that by Your Holy Spirit you are seeking to make us increasingly like him.

And so, Lord, we ask that by your Spirit in this aspect of our lives, as we serve one another, that we would do so with humility, with a dependence upon you, and with the faithfulness. Father, shape us into the likeness of Christ. May we be people who trust in you, who obey you, and who love one another. And Lord, may this be for your glory. May the way in which we serve and the way in which we live testify to your goodness and your greatness. We ask this in Christ's name, amen.

Worship Singing

Song: Take My Life by Chris Tomlin, Frances Ridley Havergal, Henri Abraham Cesar Malan, Louie Giglio

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Reuben*

Lord, we thank you that you are the servant king, that you laid aside your majesty so that we could be made worthy. Lord, we give our hearts to you. And in our devotion, Lord, help us to serve each other and to put others before ourselves. So, Lord, won't you be raised high in our praise and our glory as we serve one another, as we devote our lives to you? We bless your name, Jesus. We thank you for who you are and what you're doing in our lives. We bless everyone in this room and everyone online. Thank you for your presence, Lord. In Jesus' name, aAmen.

Conclusion *Speaker: Reuben*

Thanks everyone. There'll be a prayer team to pray with you up the front, so do come forward. Don't forget, there's the QR codes and survey forms in the foyer for serving if you want to respond to that. Bless you.

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.*