

## **Service Overview**

**Speaker:** Christine

**Sermon Series:** A Place At The Table

**Message:** A Place At The Table For Friends

**Scripture Reference:** Matthew 9: 9-13

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## **Table of Contents** *Click to navigate*

- ▶ [Service Welcome](#)
- ▶ [Worship Singing](#)
- ▶ [Post-Worship Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events](#)
- ▶ [Bible Reading](#)
- ▶ [Sermon](#)
- ▶ [Post-Sermon Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Worship Singing](#)
- ▶ [Conclusion](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Conclusion Continued](#)
- ▶ [Online Outro](#)

## **Service Welcome** *Speaker: Worship Team*

Good morning. Welcome. We're going to start our service with the praise and worship. Let's all stand up and join in.

## **Worship Singing**

**Song:** Rise by Kirby Kaple, Pat Barrett, Tony Brown

**Song:** Bless God by Brandon Lake, Brooke Ligertwood, Cody Carnes

**Song:** King of Kings by Hillsong Worship, Brooke Ligertwood

## **Post-Worship Prayer** *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Oh Lord, we lift up your name today. We give you all glory. And Lord, it's our joy to bring you praise. Father, son and Holy Spirit, you are our God. We fix our eyes on you afresh. We position our hearts before you in worship. We position our hearts before you to hear from you, to receive from you, to love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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

**Kathy:** Well, I want to say really big welcome to everyone, including those who are joining us online. If you're new or visiting today, I really want to say a really big welcome to you as well. We have a really exciting week coming, so for those who haven't managed to get away on school holidays, don't have jealousy about that, because there are some really great things coming up this week for us as a church.

So we are celebrating our 10th annual art installation. We have an opening night this Saturday night on October 5. The art installation is going to be open from 5:00 – 7:30 PM, but we're also going to be having an art sale and canapés and mocktails. How swish, hey? And it's just going to be beautiful, I think. That twilight time of being able to gather together, to worship God in this space downstairs in the art installation, to be able to have much joy and celebrate here whilst looking at some amazing art. And, if you do have blank walls, just bring along your credit card. All of the money that's raised through that art sale is going toward our ministry centre.

And then, on Sunday night, we're having another baptism. Yes, I know, another one! Can I just say, though, if you haven't been baptised, if you have never made a public declaration of your faith to follow Jesus, you're more than welcome to talk to us about getting baptised or to explore more about what baptism is. Just come and say stay for a while after the service. One of the pastoral team would love to talk with you about it.

**Stephen:** The reason I'm up is that Kathy was down to do the church news and, she said, "You know what? There's so many exciting things happening. I think there we need two of us up here to talk about it." So that's why I'm here.

I actually do want to talk to you where we're up to with our new ministry centre. If you are new to the life of our church, we've been talking about that this for around about the last 3 to 4 years. And we're just taking steps. And we took a big step a couple of weeks ago at our church meeting. And I just want to talk about where we're going. So over the coming months, we are engaging a consultant and they're going to be working closely with us, to assist us with the project objectives, particularly around such things as price and the quality, what we're going to build it out of, the construction methodology, and how long it's going to take and how that process will go about.

In summary, over the next two months, there are two things that as a church, we want to do. One is to actually do that process. And in that process, price will be a really big thing. So the latest estimate came in, as many of you would know, and it was around about the \$4.5 million mark. And so what we're going to do is actually work with the consultant in terms of how can we be really effective in using what we're getting and what we need for the best price possible. So that's one of the reasons we've entered into the consultancy. So that's one thing that's happening over the next few months.

But the other thing that we want to do is, as a church, when we began discussing this back in 2021, we made the commitment that before we begin building, we would raise one third of the funds. And that was at that stage \$1.2 million. This makes it now \$1.5 million. We are still committed to raising one third before we've commenced building. So at the moment, we've raised almost \$900,000. So \$900,000 down, \$600,000 to go. So whilst this consultancy process is happening over the next 8 to 9 months, we are aiming to raise a further \$600,000.

So what we'd love for you to do, is over the coming weeks, would you thoughtfully and prayerfully consider how you could see this proposed ministry centre become a real ministry centre? And particularly during the month of November, we're going to invite everyone to either make a gift, if you haven't done so already or were planning to, this would be a great time to do it in November. Or alternatively, at the same time, make a pledge for the coming 8 to 9 months what you can contribute, what you can commit to for giving. I know that many of you have committed already to a one off gift or regular giving. And so we thank you for that.

However, the reality is that to see the proposal become a reality will require sacrifice from us all. And the amount that each of us will be able to give will be different. It will not be the same. And God understands the circumstances that each of us are in. The question is, is it possible to raise \$600,000 in the next eight months? It is. So I'm going to give you a different perspective to look at \$600,000, \$600,000 is this: if each one of us adults in the room didn't buy one coffee a day (around \$5 a day) for the next eight months, we would not only make \$600,000, but we would exceed it quite substantially. So that's it. The \$600,000 equates to one coffee a day for every adult in this church for the next eight months. That's it. Can you give up a coffee a day? I can, it's so easy, so easy. Anyway, I just wanted to get you up to speed.

Those who are able to drink more coffee might need to sacrifice more, and you realize that now tea drinkers will go, "Great. I don't have to give anything." So anyway, no, that's just a way of looking at it. But would you continue to be thoughtful about it and prayerful? Like I said, the next 8 to 9 months are really important as we go through the consultancy process, as we try and get what we need at the best possible price, but also to raise that remaining \$600,000.

**Kathy:** I guess the main messaging in there that we want to say is that when we all become part of this, it becomes far more possible. You look at that figure and you go, "Oh my gosh, I don't have that. None of us do." But when you spread it across all of us and we all come before God and see what we can sacrifice, it becomes far more possible. So we'd love you to do that.

Also, I do want to say thank you to everyone who serves in our church. Like it takes a small army, just to serve church in the way that we do. It's not just about serving ourselves in there. We just get to rub shoulders every single week with those who don't yet know Jesus. And we're seeing people exploring faith, and we're seeing people come here for the very first time. And I know that some of you are going into your sent places and you're taking Jesus there.

So, I want to say thank you to everyone who makes just ministry in this space possible. Thank you. If you've been on a roster in the last four months, doing anything at all, we're about to come into our next set of rosters in November, and I want to issue an invitation. If you don't currently serve in a way in our church, we'd love for you to join us. There's some ways that you can do that practically, like gardening or cleaning or doing practical hands on things, setting out chairs. There's some ways that you serve by assisting with sound or tech. There's some ways that you can serve by bringing morning tea, or supper if you come to an evening congregation. There's also ways that you can serve by being part of our worship team as well.

So that's primarily what our rosters cover. And it is just a 4 month commitment. So if you're able to do that, as I say, it takes a small army to make this place function. But know that in making it function, it's not just rolling out same old, same old, God is transforming lives through us as we see on our beautiful tree collage. And there's just so many that are really exploring faith right now as well. So thank you, because it has been such an exciting year, especially with 31 baptisms with some more to come. And just the way in which God has been at work in that church.

**Stephen:** So, we'd love for you to put aside the date of this 1st of December. On December the 1st, what we're going to do across all three congregations is actually have a time of thanksgiving. We will be having meals together, particularly on the Sunday, where we'll be sharing lunch. And so regardless if you attend the 8:45 or 10:45 service, you're invited to this lunch. We would love both the morning congregations to come back around about midday. And we will have just a wonderful lunch together.

But through the service is also just a time of thanksgiving for all that God has been doing among us this year. So on the 1st of December, please make every effort to be here on that Sunday. That would be wonderful.

## **Bible Reading: Matthew 9: 9-13 (NIV UK)**

*<sup>9</sup>As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

*<sup>10</sup>While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'*

*<sup>12</sup>On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. <sup>13</sup>But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."<sup>[a]</sup> For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'*

## **Sermon: A Place At The Table For Friends** *Speaker: Christine*

Hey, it's been a while since I've been up here, so I might be nervous in the beginning, but we'll see how we go. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you are present in this place by your spirit. Lord, we ask you to speak to us. Lord, you have something to say to each of us, and we open our hearts to you right now. Amen. Sir, as Steve said, we're in our final week of our final series on the table.

In this final series, we've been looking at the invitation to the table and also being those willing to make room for others to join us at the table. As we spoke about that last week, for the unexpected guest like the woman who was at Jesus's feet with her tears, or as we spoke about the week before, about how the table is a table for all nations, and about how the table is a table of surprise.

Today we will be looking at a slightly different table, and we will be looking at sitting at 'their' table. The table of our friends, families, neighbours and colleagues who do not know Jesus, because it is at these tables that we have a unique opportunity to share God's love and to have incredible kingdom impact.

When I was a few years out of school, I went to a birthday party of a school friend of mine. I knew the party would evolve into late night drinking and likely other substances, considering the home it was hosted at. It was a boys' shared house, and when I got there, the conversations were already getting wild and crude, and it didn't take long for the other guests to realise that I was one of those good Christian girls, which I could tell was quite repulsive. And they ignored my awkward presence at their friend's birthday party. I planned to leave as soon as it was polite to do so.

Maybe you've had a similar experience. Events where you only knew the hosts and the crowds. They were not your sort of crowd, and you were ready to go home before you even got to the event. At my friend's birthday party, my awkward attendance was unwelcomed by most of the guests who

had fun company. Well, except one guest. When this guest learned that I was a Christian, he asked me question after question about my faith, and I could see that his questions were genuine. And to him, I was quite a phenomenon. He was from a Sikh background, and I wouldn't be surprised if he had never met a Christian before. By the time I left the party, I had invited him to an alpha course that our church was about to run at the time, which he then attended. This was 6 years ago, and every year since, at least once or twice I still get a random text from him asking about God or faith or the meaning of life.

It is at the tables of our friends, families, colleagues and neighbours who don't know God that we have a unique opportunity to share God's love and to have incredible kingdom impact. So let's have a look at their table. What is their table? Well, their table is their world. In today's passage, Jesus was hosted by one of the most disreputable people in the society of his day, the tax collector. Matthew and Jesus came from two totally different worlds. Jesus was a Jewish rabbi, a known travelling spiritual teacher, thoroughly versed in the law and Jewish law and customs. And he had the student disciples, and he taught in synagogues. Matthew, on the other hand, was barely a Jew. He betrayed his own people and worked for the hated Roman occupiers and was a tax collector. He made his wealth off the Jews, and the Jews in turn ostracised him. Matthew's friends Jews would not associate with. They were sinners and other tax collectors.

Matthew and Jesus lived in two very different worlds. They came from two very different ways of life for them to hang out together, like a sheep trying to hang out with a fish. Sheep don't swim and fish don't eat grass. So when Jesus invited Matthew to follow him, this would have been unheard of. And with Matthew's added bad reputation, it would have been shocking. Shocking for both sides. For Matthew's associates, it would have been weird. And for Jesus's acquaintances this would have been outlandish.

But an invitation was what Matthew was waiting for. Matthew was so pleased about being invited to follow Jesus that he invited him to a banquet at his place for his with all his tax collector friends. But Matthew's invitation would have seemed like a step too far. It was one thing for a tax collector to become a disciple and to follow Jesus, and maybe somehow regain his reputation through his new association with Jesus. It was another thing altogether for Jesus to accept an invite and to enter and participate in his world. Entering Matthew's world would have looked like Jesus was identifying himself as one of them. And besides that, it would have been a bit of an awkward banquet party, right? How would they relate to each other? What would the tax collectors and Jesus's disciples having come in to talk about?

It was just like me at my friend's birthday party. I was a complete misfit. It was not the crowd that I would choose to hang out with. But you see, Jesus's friendship with Matthew gave him an in into Matthew's world and an in with Matthew's friends that Jesus may otherwise have never had met. We don't know what conversations took place at the banquet, but I would not be surprised if some of these people became followers of Jesus like Matthew did.

When we sit at the tables of other people, we're not just eating in another location. It's not the same as meeting them at a restaurant. When we sit and eat at the table and someone's home, we leave our world and our comfort from the things that we are familiar with, and we enter their world and their comforts and the things that they are familiar with. We sit at their table, we cross barriers, and we enter their world. And it is at these tables that we have a unique opportunity to show God's love and to bring incredible kingdom impact in their lives. As followers of Jesus, we have all been called and commissioned and sent by God in Matthew 28.

Sent means 'sent out'. We don't stay in our own home. We are sent out, and eating at people's tables is almost an assumed part of God's calling. Jesus sent out his disciples two by two and as he does, he commands them to enter people's homes and to eat at their tables. He said, "*when you enter a house*", 'when', not 'if', 'when', and stay there. He says, "eating and drinking whatever they give to you. And again, when you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you."

But he doesn't call us to do something that he hasn't done already himself. This is the very nature of God. He crossed barriers and he entered our world. "*Jesus, being the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing, being made in human likeness.*"

Jesus gave up his heavenly dwelling place, his divine status, and he became flesh. And he made his dwelling among us. Jesus not only presented himself to us, but he engaged himself. He invited Matthew to follow him. And when he did, he didn't just walk on, expecting Matthew to follow him behind him without engaging with Matthew more, knowing him just as he entered our world. God calls us to enter their world and to sit at their table.

So we have established what their table is. Now we come to our second point. Why do we why do we cross barriers and enter their world? What drives us to do this? I invite you to search your heart for a moment. Imagine some of the people in your context who don't know God. God calls us to enter their world and to sit at their table.

Does this sermon topic so far sit comfortably for you? No. To be honest, this sermon topic doesn't sit comfortably for me. It doesn't because it has a very clear application, that is to go and to sit at the tables of my friends, families and colleagues and neighbours who don't know God. This application requires action and sacrifice from me, and my first response is "I can host."

I don't enjoy crossing barriers and giving up my comforts. I didn't enjoy being at my school friend's birthday party with a crowd of people I didn't know. When the Pharisees saw Jesus eating and drinking with Matthew and his tax collector friends, they asked Jesus' disciples in shock why he was associating himself with them. "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

We often think poorly of the Pharisees, but we need to appreciate how fervently they served God and followed his law. The Pharisees made a lot of sacrifices in their lifestyle in order to devote themselves to God, but sadly, they took it too far and in doing so, they missed the heart of God. They missed the wh. And if this sermon application that we are called to go into sit at their tables does not sit comfortably for you, as it does not for me, then I wonder if we too, like the Pharisees, have missed the heart of God.

If we focus too much on the sacrifices that we have to make, and we missed the why, why do we sit at their table? What drives us to sit at their table? On hearing the Pharisees' question, Jesus said to them, *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."* When a doctor is needed, the situation is usually pretty bad. No one else but a doctor can help that sick person and change this situation. Jesus was implying that Matthew and his tax collector friends situation was desperate like that. Like a sick person. They needed what only he could give them. Jesus continued, *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'"*

A few weeks ago, I went with a group to see cross-cultural work in a Southeast Asian country. While I was there, I got sick with diarrhea and even turning in bed made me nauseous. And this lasted for eight days. As I lay on an uncomfortable mattress, listening to the loud friend sounds of the call to prayer, I wondered what I was doing in this strange place, sick and bedridden, away from loved ones. Giardia is a common sickness for missionaries to get, and as I lay there in that hot, dingy room, I couldn't understand how people made the sacrifices they do to do missionary work overseas. But later I read this verse, *"I desire mercy, not sacrifice."* And it hit me.

I realised that this whole time I'd been focusing on the sacrifices. How can missionaries make the sacrifice as they do the mission work overseas? Like constantly being at risk of getting sick of giardia? Sacrifice may be involved, but it is not what motivates mission. It isn't even what pleases God. He says, *"I desire mercy, not sacrifice."* It is mercy that drives us. Jesus made the biggest sacrifice, but it was not the sacrifice which drove him to the cross. It was mercy. Love.

The truth is, all people who are without God are in the same state of desperate need as Matthew and his friends. All our friends, families, colleagues and neighbours who do not know God. Those people we imagined just a moment ago are like a sick person who are in need of a doctor and without a doctor, they cannot be saved. And when a doctor sees a sick person, is their response, *"Oh, I guess I can sacrifice some time for you?"* Or is their response one of mercy? Don't they see a person's need and have compassion on them, and do everything in their power to answer that need? They may need to sacrifice time and resources, but that isn't even a thought.

What drives us is compassion for the lost. This is why we sit at their table. We know what it was like to be far away from God, and we want people to be able to know and find life in him. We have experienced love when he initiated the relationship and stepped into our world, and we want others to experience that love as well. Where would we be if he had not come to us?



See, God calls us to sit at their table, and the table is their world. And mercy is what drives us at their table. But how do we sit at their table? The application of this sermon is clear. That is, to go and to sit at the tables of our friends, family, colleagues and neighbours who don't know God. But there's quite an important factor needed in order to apply this.

We need the invitation. We can't make our friends host us. So how do we sit at their table? When I started to explore the idea of mission and that call for myself around four years ago, I met with a mission mentor and I told him how I wanted to reach out to unreached people groups, since I realised that many Australians have a chance of hearing the gospel, but people in unreached and places in people groups have little to no chance of hearing about God. And my mission mentor challenged me and she asked, "Well, seeing that many unreached people groups come from other cultures, do you have any friends from another culture?"

And I saw it, and I thought about it, and I realised that all my cross-cultural friends were second generation and had grown up in Australia. I didn't have any friends from another culture. And she challenged me. She said, "Well, maybe the first step is for you to make friends with people from another culture." Now, how does one go from having no connections to people from another culture to having them? Well, I can't actually give you an exact how, but I can tell you that it did happen.

Now, 4 years on, most of my time is spent with most of my friends who are people from other cultures. You see, when we are intentional about something, when we open our hearts and make something a priority, we can make it happen. The big effect in us being invited to the table is not people inviting us, but it is in our own hearts and in our own openness to God and our willingness to go.

I'm constantly getting invited to the tables of others. Sometimes I have to eat three different cuisines in one day of home cooked meals, and it is not because I'm special, but it is because I've been intentional in engaging with people in their lives. And you see this in the story of Matthew. Jesus initiated relationship. He opened himself. Timothy and Matthew then responded to Jesus' openness by giving him an invitation.

If our hearts are open, God will open the doors. But we need to recognise that each of us are different. For me, the calling was to be among people from other cultures, but not all apostles were called to the Gentiles, only Paul. And it is important not to compare ourselves, because for each of us, the people that we are called to and the barriers that we will cross and the worlds that we will enter, will look different.

There are some people's worlds that I cannot enter, so that people in this congregation can enter. For example, when I moved to Wentworthville, and I thought I should try and meet some of the local South Asian community there. And so I went to a mothers group to try and hang out with the

mothers who were of a Hindu background. But I am newly married and not a mother. And as I stood there among these mothers and children in a mothers group without my own child to occupy myself, I felt very awkward and out of place, and I had no idea how to engage myself with these mothers. And I felt terrible about it. And I felt very low that day, because what was wrong with me?

But upon reflection, I realised that I'm not in that season of life, and I can't force myself to be someone that I'm not. I can't naturally make friends with people in bikie gangs or tradies or people at gyms. It's just not me and that's okay. It does not make me less of a Christian if I can't enter into their worlds.

There are people with tables in each of our lives, and so who are the people and what are the tables in front of you? It may be people in your family. Maybe the table is the lunchroom table at work. Maybe it is your next-door neighbour's front porch, or a picnic table at the sports field where you play. Maybe it's the common room at the retirement village or a playground at school, or at a dog park, or a local community group. Where has God uniquely positioned you to enter people's worlds?

And I understand that for some people it is hard to even get out of the house, let alone into someone else's home, and so the invitation is just to take small steps. It may just start by you asking someone you trust to come along with you to meet someone new. And it can even be a Christian at church. But just practice building a new relationship and crossing a barrier and see where it goes from there. Just take a step, but make it a step the size that you can take.

It is mercy that drives us, but it does not mean that sacrifice won't be involved in order to sit at their table. We will all have to give up some element of comfort, because we will be crossing over a barrier into their world from our world. And you'll find, though it is uncomfortable to make that first step to being the place where God calls us to be, it's the best place you can be in. This is where you will thrive. In fact, someone once said to me recently, it can be addictive because when you step out, you see God at work.

And that brings us to our fourth and last point of this sermon. What happens when we start sitting at their table? Well, sometimes nothing much happens in the moment. A few months ago, I started an art group for Afghan ladies, and I had and I still have great visions for this group and where it will lead with gospel opportunities. But lately I've been disappointed. All we do is chit chat and often in Dari, which I cannot engage in. Sometimes you feel like you're spending a lot and a lot of time with people, and nothing from your perspective seems to be happening. But it takes time to build trust and openness that goes both ways, so that we can share our lives and our faith with a person.

But one of the wonderful surprises for me as I've stepped out and met people from other cultures, is the great friends I've made. When we sit at other people's tables a friendship and trust are deep into it, another level, where you get something so real and lasting. And when we open ourselves up,

and we actually also open ourselves up to more friends through their relational networks, like Matthew and his tax collector friends.

And some people who have eaten at the table with me when I first met them, I didn't even know what to talk about because we came from such different worlds. But I couldn't have imagined the depth of relationship and friendship I have now with them and the friends that I've gained through them, and the blessings that those friends have become to me. So yeah, we gain friends.

Another thing that happens is that we can get rejected. Jesus was labelled a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Sometimes people will look down on us for spending time with the people we do. And we may seem strange or uncool, and people may not even want to associate with us anymore.

But it is worth the cost, right? Because something else that we see happen is we begin to see kingdom impact when we sit at other people's tables. This week, the ladies in that group were saying something together to each other in Dari, and one of them translated it for me. They were saying to each other that this is the only place where we feel happy and peaceful. Not at work, not at TAFE, not at home. Only here. One had almost tears in her eyes when she said how happy she was to come to this art group. She said, "Your kindness is different."

You see, the Holy Spirit dwells within us. And even though we don't always think we're doing much. In fact, I'm often stressed at this art group trying to teach them art. And though we don't always think we're doing much, our very presence in people's lives is bringing God's presence and God's light to them.

Most of the ladies in this group came through the invitation of just one lady who I met two years ago. When I met her, she was a strong Muslim who came from a very different world to me. I didn't know how to relate with her when I first met her. Since then, she's become a good friend, and I've had many meals sitting cross-legged on the floor of her home. And now we meet weekly to read the Bible together, and now she's inviting her friends to this group, where she's meeting other Christians.

I am yet to see the kingdom impacts that will come through this one friendship. You see, God calls us to sit at the table, and their table is their world. We open ourselves and we take a step because it is mercy that drives us to sit at their table. And when we take that step and go where God is in us, we see incredible kingdom impact.

## **Post-Sermon Prayer** *Speaker: Christine*

Yes, Lord, you love those people that we imagined a moment ago. You know every hair on the head. You knit them together in their mother's womb. Lord, may mercy drive us to sit at their table. May we become a friend to them that brings your life into their world, and from them may come others in their world, Lord, that the gospel can be contextualised in their environment, Lord, that they understand and can earn for themselves. Lord, we thank you that you came to us and you came into our world. We bless your name. Amen.

## **Worship Singing**

**Song:** A Thousand Hallelujahs by Brooke Ligertwood

## **Conclusion** *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Thank you so much, worship team. I want to say thank you to Christine as well. Christine, you speak with such authenticity. And every time you speak, the power of God speaks through you. He uses you as you speak. I love that story of you starting from a place of going, "I actually don't have those friends yet, but, God, I'm willing."

And I just feel like there's something in us for all of us, you know? Just that no matter what our starting point is, whether you're surrounded by people who already know Jesus or whether you actually just go, "You know, I've got people in my life who don't yet know him," but whatever. Our starting point is that with intentionality and prayer that we come before God and we just say, "God, would you show me who it is?"

In fact, why don't we just close our eyes and just pray into this place? Who is it that God is putting on your radar or has put on your radar who doesn't yet know him? And what might a next step in extending friendship look like? Let's take a moment to listen. God might show you something in this moment. What might the next step look like?

## **Prayer** *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Lord God, I want to pray that your mercy would rise up in us, that we'd stop looking at this from the place of sacrifice and deciding that perhaps we don't have enough time or enough whatever. But, Lord God, that we would be compelled by your mercy. Jesus, I want to pray that the things that you care about the most would be the things that we care about the most.

Lord, move our hearts toward those who don't yet know you. And Lord God, lead us by your Holy Spirit. I thank you that you don't just drop us in the deep end, but you lead us step by step. And so, God, I want to pray that as a first step that we would be willing to align what we care about with what you care about. That we would be willing to open our eyes to those around us. That we would be willing to be led by your spirit to take a next step.

And Jesus, I pray that this authenticity that Christine speaks out of what God would become the story of all of us. That we're able to talk about those who are around our table and that we're around their tables. Being salt and light, bringing kindness and ready to speak of the love and truth of Jesus. So, God, I just want to say thank you. Thank you that you would partner with us. Thank you that you trust us with your gospel. We bless you, Lord. Amen.

### **Conclusion Continued** *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

You're more than welcome to join us for morning tea today. If you would like prayer, we have our prayer team along the front, and, perhaps you'd like to pray with someone for someone that is on your heart, or perhaps there's a need that you have as well. But come and receive prayer as well.

### **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.*