



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Love in Action – Luke 10:38-42 **SPEAKER** Ps Lawrence Chua
THEME The Glorious Church of the Lord Jesus Christ **DATE** 12 & 13 Nov 2022

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This week's sermon is based on two scriptural references taken from Luke 10:38-42 (NKJV) and John 11:1-7 (NKJV). The interpersonal relationship between Mary, Martha and Lazarus in these two texts illustrates how they love one another in Christ and demonstrate love in action.

SP Lawrence Chua exhorts us to follow their example as we consider how members of the family of God can sometimes feel lonely and disconnected even in church. Jesus had set the example for us to love one another in feet washing and we are to love one another as brothers and sisters in the family of Christ in the same way.

LOVE IN ACTION

There are three ways we can show love in action:

1. Hospitality creates fellowship

Martha made fellowship with Jesus by extending hospitality to him. It was love in action on her part. Similarly, we are encouraged to extend hospitality (Rom 12:10-13) to others by opening our homes up. However, due to limited opportunities to practise hospitality here in Singapore and today's culture, this may be a lost art among us.

Welcoming people into our church family is a challenge for many of us. Existing close relationships we have already established are diluted when we allow newcomers to invade into our cosy comfort zone. By keeping people out from our familiar friendship circles and comfort zones, we are not loving newcomers. Hence, we are not loving one another.

SP Lawrence challenges us to open our hearts, our homes, our comfort zones and more specifically, our cell groups to others. When Mary and Martha extended hospitality to Jesus, they placed Him in the picture in that relationship. Likewise, we start the process of extending hospitality by first placing Jesus at the centre of our relationships as a church or cell family.

While extending hospitality is laborious work, we see the fellowship of labour in Martha (Luke 10:38-42) and in Jesus (John 11:1-7). Jesus accepted Martha's hospitality. He did not criticise Martha for it, but for her worry and anxiety over other things. While extending hospitality to one another is important, learning to engage one another in conversation is equally as important.

2. Inclusivity in conversation

Mary prioritised time to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his Word. She enjoyed the fellowship of conversation with Him, while Martha was fretting in the kitchen. Mary demonstrated love in action by first engaging Jesus by speaking to him before exercising the discipline of listening to him. While talking to somebody is a good way to express love and concern, listening to that person is also an important way of expressing love. SP Lawrence Chua exhorts us to put love in action by speaking and listening to one another more.

Conversations should promote inclusivity instead of exclusivity. Mary may have chosen the better part of sitting at Jesus' feet to listen to him, but she failed to help Martha in her hospitality work before the conversation and to include Martha in the conversation. If Martha did not extend hospitality to Jesus in the first place, the conversation would not have happened. Hence extending hospitality precedes engaging others in conversations. In fact, hospitality creates opportunities for deep conversations to take place. As such, loving one another motivates the practice of hospitality and the discipline of conversation.

3. Vulnerability in suffering

Being vulnerable involves the willingness to show emotion or to allow one's weakness to be seen or known. It also involves the risk of being emotionally hurt. If you consider what Jesus did in Matt 8:5-13 where he healed the centurion's servant, he could have done the same thing here by resurrecting Lazarus from the dead at a distance. Instead he chose to travel all the way from where he was to Bethany in person, even if it meant running the risk of getting stoned by the Jews.

Jesus was greatly moved and he wept in fellowship with Mary and Martha's grief and sorrow. He deliberately made a house visit in order to share in the sorrows of those He loves. This was love in action. He demonstrated His vulnerability through His tears as he shared in the sisters' suffering. As members of God's family, we can learn to be vulnerable in sharing our sorrows. We can also learn to comfort and console one another with the comfort and consolation that we have received from God in our own tribulations and troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

CONCLUSION

Superficiality in relationships is cold. All of us long for genuine warmth and love in our relationships with one another. God has the ability to remove the layers of hardness in our hearts to make us emotionally vulnerable again so that we can reveal our own vulnerability and share in the sorrows of those suffering around us as well. As we place Christ at the center of our relationships, we are motivated by love for one another to practise hospitality and sharpen the discipline of speaking and listening in conversations with people around us. Only then, can we as a church, show love in action.

QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time where you have been the recipient of one or all of these 3 ways Ps Lawrence shared about. How did God minister to you through that?

2. In order to fellowship with Mary and Martha in their grief, Jesus made himself vulnerable too. What does being vulnerable mean to you? Is there someone you can fellowship with in their suffering?

3. SP Lawrence made this remark in his conclusion, "Superficiality in relationships is cold. All of us long for genuine warmth and love in our relationships with one another." What can you do in the coming week to connect with others and show them love?