

^{ESV} **Genesis 2:18** Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

'It is not good that the man should be alone...'

- **Sin** testifies to the communal nature of humanity (Rom 5:12-21)

^{ESV} **Genesis 3:16** To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

^{ESV} **Genesis 9:6** "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. ⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it."

- **Salvation** testifies to the communal nature of humanity (Luke 24:44-49)

^{ESV} **Romans 3:21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 15:21** For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

- **Our responsibilities** testify to the communal nature of humanity (Rom 12)

^{ESV} **Romans 13:1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

^{ESV} **Romans 13:8** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

What is the trajectory of community?

Community, history, and the future... (Gen 1:26-27 with Rev 21:1-22:5)

Community, goodness, and gladness... (Gen 2:18 with Is 65:17-25)

What is our purpose in studying community?

Sunday, September 8, 2024
Danny Capon, *Pastor*

A Theology of Community
No. 1 | Introduction

Selected Scriptures

Introduction

A Theology...

...of Community

What is community?

A Dilemma...

Is "community" in the Bible?

Note: *The New American Bible* ("the only translation approved for use during Mass...in the Catholic Church in the United States") uses "community" (157x) to translate several different words, including **OT** = "families" (Gen 12:3, *mishpachah*), "all who went out of the gate of (the) city" (Gen 34:24), "congregation" (Ex 12:3, *edah*), "gates"/"town"/"courts" (Deut 12:12, *shaar*), "assembly" (Deut 23:1, *qahal*), "assembly" (Deut 33:4, *qehillah*), "council" (Ezek 13:9, *sod*); **NT** = "congregation" (Acts 4:32, *plethos*), "commonwealth" (Eph 2:12, *politeia*), "brotherhood" (1 Pet 2:17, *adelphotes*). Also, the *New International Version* (86x), *The New Jerusalem Bible* (166x), the *New Living Translation* (96x), and the *New Revised Standard Version* (19x) similarly, use "community" to translate several different words.

How does "community" relate to other words (concepts)?

e.g. group, mob, society, culture, organization, corporation, relationship, association (or partnership), crowd (or throng), congregation (or assembly), etc.

A Starting Point...

Etymology

(Merriam-Webster) Middle English *comunete*, from Anglo-French *communité*, from Latin *communitat-*, *communitas*, from **communis**.

(New World Encyclopedia) *Communis*, which means "common, public, shared by all or many"...comes from a combination of the Latin prefix **con-** (which means "together") and the word **munis** (which has to do with performing services ["duty, obligation"]).

Definitions

(Oxford) A body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity. Hence: a place where a particular body of people lives.

(Cambridge) The people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality.

e.g. community college, community service, "faith community," "wheelchair-user community," etc.

What are we then looking for?

a people with a shared identity and mutual responsibility

How then can we proceed?

Does the Bible reference particular groups of people that have shared identities along with some measure of resulting mutual responsibilities?

Does the Bible provide instruction regarding recognizing certain shared identities and handling their applicable mutual responsibilities well?

How does the Bible help us think about “community”?

How does the Bible help us think about the church as “community”?

What is the origin of community?

God as community...

Some truths about God:

- He is—that is, He exists (Gen 1:1; Heb 1:6)
- He is one—that is, He is perfectly united in Himself (Deut 6:4)
- He is the only one—that is, He is the only God (Is 45:6; 1 Tim 1:17)
- He is three in one—that is, He is one God in three persons (Eph 4:4-6)

The Trinity as community:

- Jesus talks about the communal nature of God related to His ministry

^{ESV} **John 14:16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ... **16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

- Paul talks about the communal nature of God involved in salvation

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption through **Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were

the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit**, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

“What is the Trinity for? ... (The) first and clearest answer has to be that the Trinity isn't ultimately for anything, any more than God is for the purpose of anything. Just as you wouldn't ask what purpose God serves or what function he fulfills, it makes no sense to ask what the point of the Trinity is or what purpose the Trinity serves. The Trinity isn't for anything beyond itself, because the Trinity is God. God is God in this way: God's way of being God is to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit simultaneously from all eternity, perfectly complete in a triune fellowship of love.” (Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, pp. 67-68)

“The doctrine of the Trinity—that God is a loving Father, his beloved Son, and the Spirit who unites them in his bond of love—is a Christian distinctive. ... If God were merely a single person...he would be entirely self-centered. How could such a God love? He would have existed from eternity past all by himself, with literally no one and nothing else around. Why would this singular person create something else to exist? ... Only our triune God can be entirely satisfied within himself...(If) God is eternally three, a community of self-giving lovers, then it isn't possible for him to be selfish. God has always loved the other within the Godhead. His very essence is love (1 John 4:8).” (Michael Wittmer, *Becoming Worldly Saints*, pp. 79-80)

Humans as community...

Some truths about humanity:

- They have been created by God (Gen 1:26-27)
- They have been created by God in His image (Gen 1:26-27)
- They have been created by God as male and female (Gen 1:26-27)
- They have been created by God to not be alone (Gen 2:18)

“How do we go about understanding human relationships? Human relationships have a close relation to the Trinitarian character of God. In fact, the Trinitarian character of God is the deepest starting point for understanding personal relationships.” (Vern Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology*, p. 23)

“We yearn for community because we were meant for community: it is built into our very nature as human beings. Created in the image of the Triune God, we are made to be in relation to God, to one another, and to God's good creation. Our very existence is a gift from God, who, although self-sufficient in the eternal, loving communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, extends that communion by creating that which is not God.” (Robert Sherman, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit*, p. 1)

Humanity as community:

- **Creation** testifies to the communal nature of humanity (Acts 17:22-31)

^{ESV} **Genesis 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.