**Homegroup Notes for Week Beginning 21/4/2025.**

**Introduction:**

**‘Unless’: Looking to the Cross in John’s Gospel.**

**Belmont Morning Teaching, March 30th, and April 6th, 2025.**

In the two weeks running up to Easter we will look at two stories from John that anticipate the cross.

The two weeks in John are linked by the word ‘Unless.’ This helps us to focus on the essential nature of Christ’s sacrifice for us- a common question is ‘Why did Jesus have to die?’- and explore that in two distinct directions from the different narratives.

**These notes are offered for any meeting around Easter- I confess I am a little confused as to who will meet when in that period.**

****Begin your time together listening reflecting on and committing to memory Mark 10.45, ***For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.***

* Briefly shareyour response to this verse.
* How does it impact your everyday living?

Pause now and listen together to the song ‘The Servant King,’ which can be found here,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0FSZ_iSYO8>

or here

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3OVBKgbL19kJk6ZWaU5b8i?si=d662c7c53a8b4608>

**PRAY**

Read John 13.1-17 aloud, ideally twice.

* Begin by sharing phrases or words that particularly struck you as you read.
* Verse 1 sets the scene. It speaks of what Jesus knows about timing, purpose, and destination and of his determination to ‘love to the end’ or to show ‘the full extent of his love.’
* What do we **know** that affects our capacity to persevere with Jesus? How has that helped you?
* At the heart of the passage is an action, the act of foot washing. You might like to agree for two people to wash each other’s feet.
* What does that act make people feel?
	+ For the washer and the washee?
* The ‘Unless’ in this story comes in an exchange between Peter and Jesus is verses 6-10.
	+ Peter resists Jesus’ washing. Can we do the same? Is it humiliating to be washed?
	+ Jesus says that this washing is non-negotiable. What does this tell us about following him and the life we live as believers?
* Read again verses 12-17.
	+ Jesus asks a very sharp question, ***“Do you understand what I have done for you?*** How might we hear that question as we approach Easter?
	+ Jesus also commissions us in these verses saying, ***“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”***
	+ What do you think that might mean for us? How can we live that out in the context of our house group?
	+ Jesus says that no servant is greater than his master and blessing comes from following the actions of the good master. Is this your understanding of what it is to be a follower of Christ?

**NB. These notes are not designed to be followed in their entirety. Please select from them the areas you want to discuss.** This week’s material is developed from the talk on March 16th about power, position, and responsibility.

You may like to begin by reading Paul’s prayer in **Ephesians 3.14-21** in its entirety. It ends with the following blessing.

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Steve began his sermon speaking of ending prayers ‘…and may all the glory go to God.’

Why not begin this evening in a time of prayer, silently and aloud, giving glory to God for creation, salvation, and God’s goodness in our everyday? You might like to use Ephesians 3 as a springboard for this.

**Read Matthew 4.1-11.**

* When Jesus comes to face the three temptations in Matthew he is tried and hungry. Do you feel most prone to temptation at times of weakness? When are we at our most vulnerable? How can we be best prepared?
* In the third temptation Jesus is offered a great prize but at a terrible cost. How does remembering who is LORD, who has authority in our lives help us to resist temptation?
* In Matthew 28.18, Jesus says he has ‘all authority in heaven and on earth.’ How do you think he has gained this authority? What does that authority look like?
* Matthew 4.10 is Jesus' simple repost to the idol of power. Can you think of practical ways that we are being challenged to ‘worship the LORD our God and serve him only.’ PAUSE and pray for one another.
* How are we set free by knowing Jesus as our LORD when it comes to personal significance? How does our security in Jesus and our worship help us to overcome temptation and fear?

***“Sin is what happens when you worship an idol and let it dictate your behaviour. Idolatry is the real problem…to be genuinely human- to reflect the true image of God- you need to abandon idols and worship him alone.” –* Tom Wright**

* What do you think about this observation of the connection between idols and sin?
* What place does true worship have in our overcoming sin?
* If worshipping idols leads to sin, what do you think worshipping God and serving him only leads to?

**Why not end in a simple act of worship? A time of prayer, singing a simple song or listening to a worship song, sharing simply in communion?**