

Love One Another – Jn 13:34-35

Turn to Jn 13:34-35

Jesus is in the upper room here, the night he was betrayed

Just finished washing the disciples feet and identifying Judas as his betrayer . . .

When he begins unloading chapters and chapters worth of final thoughts

Things he did *not* want his disciples to miss or forget

Think it's appropriate as we finish our study of Christ's life this year, that we too end with some of his last words – one of which is to love one another

Read Jn 13:34-35

I'm not preaching this because I think we're lacking in our love for one another

In fact, our mutual love around here has been a hallmark of our church ever since we started – it runs very deep and very wide

I'm preaching this because I want it to *stay* that way

No matter how big we get or how fast we grow – I want our love for one another to be a noticeable, tangible feature of our church

Because that's the way it *should* be

It's one of the first things we see here – we are to love one another because we *should*

Because you should

It's a command, not an option – *A new commandment I give to you*

Not a new possibility; Or a new little something for your consideration

But a new *commandment* – something you should do; we have to do if we want to live in obedience to God and honor him

That you love one another

There are several different words for love in Greek, the original language of the NT

This one is the verb form of agape love (agapao)

It means to cherish, highly value, put first, show the utmost care/concern for

It's the idea of love for the sake of the object – for the sake of the one being loved

There's nothing selfish or self-serving about it

It's a love that's well thought out – coming from your mind

It's a love that's heart-felt – arising from your emotions

It's a love that's a decision – from an act of your will (more on that later)

Jesus commands us to love one another, and . . .

- It's *new* in the sense that it's fresh, not *different* from what has already been said
Way back in Lev 19:18 God said – *love your neighbor as yourself*
Jesus isn't changing that, in fact we know well that he affirmed it

The *new* part is to love like *him* – to love another despite their lack of love for you

Radical departure from the eye for an eye motif we naturally tend toward

“If you love me, I'll love you; If you don't, I won't” – that's the old, this is the new

And, he's driving home the point that if it applies *anywhere*, it applies among the people of God, the church – you, me, us

That's who the *one another* is in these verses – his disciples/followers

Referred to in the NT as the family of God; And brothers and sisters in Christ

Which means there should be a special place in your heart for those sitting around you

Just like there's a special place in your heart for those in your family

Is that true? That's what Jesus is calling us to

- The problem is, we tend to think of large organizations/churches as self-perpetuating institutions with a mind and identity of their own
Which is the exact opposite of a family comprised of people who love one another

I don't care how big we get, “we are fam-i-ly”

And just like a healthy family loves another and puts one another first

So a healthy church should love and put one another first, in word *and* deed

That's why **Gal 6:10** – *As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith*

Love one another because you should

It's not an option only when you feel like it

Only when somebody loves you; Only when you have common interests

It's a command for all of us, all the time

- Which means that some times, your love will spring from a decision of your will, more so than from warm fuzzies that tug at your heart
Often times you will love because you know you should, not because you want to
The good part is – the warm fuzzies often follow
So you end up loving not only because you should, but because you *want* to from the bottom of your heart

When you do *that*, you'll love one another . . .

Just like Jesus

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another

There's a tall order, huh? Something easier said than done

Love one another because you should was the “why”

Love one another just like Jesus is the “how”

So let me give you . . .

5 Ways to Love Just Like Jesus

1. Extend it first

Like when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples

He didn't wait for them to act, or wash his feet first

He put the towel on and washed theirs – and extended love to *them* first

Don't wait for others to love you

Take the initiative and love them first, just like Jesus

Go to them; Get involved in their life; See what they need, and respond

If you've come to Harvest for any length of time, and you're . . .

Expecting to be loved in a certain way

Or wondering what this church can do for you

Testing people to see if they're going to meet your needs

Lamenting that you're so needy and nobody cares . . .

Stop it – stop *waiting* for love, and start *extending* it, first . . . just like Jesus

2. Show mercy when it's undeserved

That's what Jesus did with Zacchaeus, the rich tax collector (Lk 19)

He saw him up in a tree, and despite the fact that he was a sinner

Despite the fact he had defrauded hundreds of people to gain his wealth

Despite the fact he deserved to be punished for his sin

Jesus showed him mercy and went to his home and ate with him

When's the last time you had opp to do that – to withhold punishment that was deserved

When's the last time you were wronged by someone, but let it go without a rebuke or a reprimand or retaliation?

I'm not saying you should do that all the time

Sometimes the best way to love one another *is* to confront wrongdoing and bring consequences to bear

But there are times when *mercy* is the best course – especially when there's a soft, repentant heart in the one who committed the offense

If we're going to love one another just like Jesus – we must show mercy when it's undeserved

3. Be a blessing when it's unexpected

Like when Jesus had compassion on the 5k and healed their sick, just before he fed them (Mt 14)

He didn't have to do that – but that's just like the love of Jesus . . .

To be a blessing when it's unexpected

I love it when I hear about random acts of kindness in our church

Like providing a meal to someone, just because you were thinking about them

Mowing somebody's lawn during a hard time in their life

Bringing someone a cup of coffee and an hour of conversation to go along with it

Driving cross county with someone; Sitting at the bedside of someone who's sick

That's what it means to love one another just like Jesus – be a blessing when it's unexpected

So many of you are exemplary in this – can't wait for it to multiply/multiply even more

4. Reach out when it's unpopular

It seemed like every time Jesus turned around, lepers were there

They were about as unpopular as it gets – shunned and avoided like the plague

Instead of steering clear of them like everybody else – he reached out to them

Touching them and paying attention to them

Loving one another just like Jesus means reaching out when it's unpopular

It means loving those whom others won't

Like going out of your way to meet people who are rough around the edges

Talking to those who seem a bit strange, or who are different than you

Welcoming those who you well know are involved in a sinful lifestyle

Somehow loving on those who have made some really poor decisions in their life

If we're going to love one another just like Jesus, we have to reach out to people even when it's unpopular

Even when your friends think you're crazy or don't approve

5. Sacrifice whenever necessary

Is that not exactly what Jesus did on the cross?

He sacrificed his life because it was necessary

He did whatever took to extend the Father's love to us

Does that characterize your love for those around you?

Are you willing to do whatever it takes to help them?

To get some dirt under your fingernails?

To “get involved” when you know it's going to sap you?

Are you willing to sacrifice your own time/interests for that of others?

Or are a prima-donna Christian preferring ease and convenience instead?

You gotta know that inconvenience and sacrifice is the *norm* when you love like Jesus

We must do so whenever necessary . . .

Because the stakes are high

Love one another because you should; Just like Jesus; Because the stakes are high (rd 35)

- People are watching – *all people will know*

For better or worse, they're peering through the blinds of life to see what you're up to

It's for better if you love like you should and they see a true disciple of Jesus Christ

It's for worse if you don't, and they see nothing at all

Or worse yet, a hypocrite who speaks a good word, but doesn't act on it

You can't control their reaction, but you *can* control what they see

And if that weren't enough . . .

- You represent the Lord – *you are my disciples*

It's not about you; It's not about me; It's not about our church

It's about the one we live for; It's about the one who lives for us

We either make him look good by our love for one another

Or look bad by our lack thereof

Even more weighty is the fact that how you are, is how people will assume Jesus is

You say you're a Christian; You say he's Lord of your life

You say he's the best thing to ever happen to you

Why *wouldn't* they assume that you reflect his ways and values?

The stakes are high because you represent the Lord

And *how* you are . . .

- Shows your true colors

Your love for others identifies you as a follower of Jesus Christ . . .

Because loving one another is what disciples of Jesus *do*

So if you love your brothers and sisters in Christ, there's no question about your identity

You're a disciple of his; you're of God

If you don't, you're not of God

1 Jn 3:10 – *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

The stakes are high because . . .

Our love for one another shows our true colors – one way or another

People are watching – for better or for worse

As his disciples, we represent the Lord – his name and fame are on the line

So ask yourself (**3 Questions**)

Who do I need to love?

Who do I need to love in our church that I’m not loving now?

Start with those in your own home – spouse, kids; parents

Maybe it’s someone in your SG, Service Team; Or the ministry in which you serve

What do I need to do?

Is there a hug you need to give? A word you need to speak?

An act you know would bless?

Do you need to start serving in ministry around here as a means to love one another?

Have you been sitting idle for too long?

When do I need to do it?

Is it a matter of waiting for an opp?

Or is it something you should do right after the service?

Whatever it is, when are you going to do it? When are you going to start?

There may or may not be something in your heart/mind as answers to those questions

But if there is, you better do it – because the stakes are high, and Jesus commands it

The same Jesus who laid down his life for you, out of love