Love One Another: Grieving to Rejoicing
John 16:12-15, 20-22
Sunday, November 1, 2026

This is the third and final week in our "Love One Another" sermon series. It's also All Saints Day, a day we set aside to remember all of the "saints" who have passed away over the last year.

Now, you may be wondering, "what's the connection? What does loving one another have to do with remembering those we have lost. And the answer is simple: everything.

Now, of course, we've got to acknowledge that remembering those we've lost can be hard. I lost my mom this back in the Spring. This morning, I'm remembering her smile, her humor, her relentless love for her children, her dedication to what is good and right. But those same memories bring the pain of grief. She's not here; there's a hole in my life where she used to be.

Each one of the names that we read just a few minutes ago carries with it the same kinds of feelings: the joy of remembrance and the grief of loss. And that grief is hard. In fact, it sucks. It's a pain that never goes away. You think you're over it and then you see something or hear something and it's right there with you again. Sometimes, it's almost enough to make you want to just give up. Life shouldn't hurt like this. Where's God in this? Is God even there?

And that's kind of what Jesus's disciples are dealing with in this scripture passage. The setting here is the same as it has been for the last two Sundays. Jesus is still sitting with his disciples after the Last Supper, giving them some final teaching, some final advice, some final preparation for their discipleship before he leaves them.

And in the process, he lets them know he IS leaving them. A littler earlier, in chapter 14, he lets them know that he's going away to prepare a place for them in his father's house, where there are many, many rooms. Immediately before this passage, he tells them he's going back to the one who sent him. He's telling them he's about to die.

Now, just imagine how those disciples must have felt. In one sense, it's easy. Jesus was like family to them. They had spent the last three years with him. They had been through good times and bad times with him. They had shared meal after meal after meal with him. It would have been like losing a dearly-loved brother or father.

But it was even more than that. They were losing their Messiah. They thought Jesus was the one; the Messiah their people had been waiting for all those years; the one who would usher in a new kingdom; the one who would throw the hated Romans out of the promised land. So, his death would represent the death of all their hopes and dreams. Because, of course, a dead man can't be a Messiah.

So, when Jesus says to them in this scripture that he has more to things to tell them, "but you cannot bear them now," they had to be thinking to themselves, "No duh!" They're sad. They're grieving, they're in pain. Their dear, dear friend, their teacher, their Messiah is about to leave them.

And Jesus acknowledges this. In fact, he compares their pain at his coming death to the pain of childbirth. Now, I've never actually given birth myself, but I hear it can be a little uncomfortable. In fact, I've heard it's just about as much pain as a human being can bear. And so, Jesus doesn't just acknowledge their pain and grief, he recognizes its magnitude. And in

doing so, he recognizes the extent of their love for him. That's the way it works with grief. The deeper the love, the deeper the grief.

But then Jesus tells them something that must have sounded crazy. He tells them it's a good thing he's leaving them. Really?! He tells them that as intense as their pain is now, it's not going to last. In fact, it's going to turn to joy. They'll be like the woman who's just given birth, and forgets about all the pain as she holds her precious child.

And at this point, the disciples had to wondering whether Jesus had lost it. How is something like that even possible?

Well, here's how Jesus explains it: ***13*** *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.* ***14*** *He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

In other words, he's telling them that he's got to leave so they can receive the Holy Spirit. And he's telling them that that Spirit will basically be Jesus' presence within them, guiding them, reminding them of what Jesus has taught them, and, most importantly, as Jesus tells them elsewhere in John's Gospel, through his presence in them, giving them new and eternal life, transforming them into the image of Christ. He's telling them that his death will give them new and eternal life, and that he will be with them forever.

And that's what happened. They were actually physically reunited with him at his resurrection. But more than that, they were permanently reunited with him at Pentecost, when his Spirit took up residence within them, giving them the eternal sort of life he had promised.

Now, I imagine that a day didn't go by without those disciples thinking about their friend Jesus and wishing he was still with them. But I also think they understood that the love they had for him, His love which dwelt within them, would *never* leave them.

Death is a mystery. It's the ultimate mystery, at least from where we're sitting. And it's one we will all face … from both sides. We'll lose those close to us. And someday, we'll be the one who's lost. We'll experience the grief and pain of loss, and someday, we'll be the one our loved ones are grieving for.

And just so we're all clear, that process of grief isn't a one-and-done deal, as much as we would like it to be. We keep experiencing it over and over again. It's kind of like that woman in labor, waiting for that next contraction, waiting for that next stab of intense pain. Grief is painful, we suffer, just as those first disciples did.

But when that grief comes, we need to remember Jesus' reminder that the depth of our grief is a reflection of the depth of our love.

And that love will never die. That's what Jesus told his disciples in this scripture, and it's what he showed them 4 days later with his resurrection. Death is not the end. Pain is not the end. Suffering is not the end.

In fact, it's new beginning. Because the love of God, which we have received from God through Jesus and His Spirit—the love which we share with one another--does not die. It is eternal. It transcends our physical death. And it lives in us.

This sermon series is about loving one another. And we need to recognize that that love comes at a cost; the pain of loss. But Jesus assures us that when we live in his love, that pain is only transitory. When we live in Jesus' love—when we love one another—we will be reunited, not just with our loved ones, but with Jesus himself.