

Christianity is a love/hate relationship

1. Jesus has loved us
2. Let us remain in his love
3. Let us love each other

John 15:9-17 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.*

Technology is wonderful, isn't it? Almost everything we do is touched by technology. We can share our services on Facebook because of the advances in technology. We can instantaneously connect with people through messaging and Facetime. We can have meetings online and don't even have to be in the same building as our coworkers. We can speak to our devices and they listen to us. We have robots vacuuming our floors. We have cars that warn us if something is in our blind spot or if we are drifting out of our lane. We can look up any bit of information we want, as long as we have a WIFI connection.

But there's the problem with technology – it all has to work together and work right. Last week, we switched wireless providers. Now, you have to get this device to speak to that device and this TV to work with this WIFI. And then the video and audio don't match up and you can't get this device to work. It's so frustrating! That's why many people consider technology a love/hate relationship. We love it when it works; hate it when it doesn't.

Jesus continues his teaching from last week about our relationship with him and with each other. In this lesson today, we see that Christianity is a love/hate relationship.

Jesus said, *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.* Why? Why would Jesus – someone so perfect – love people so sinful as you and me? Imagine diving into a burning garbage dump to save mildew that had been scraped out of the corners of your bathroom. That's what Jesus did when he died on the cross. He gave up his life for sinners. Why? Because he loves us as his Father loved him.

He loved us and he chose us. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.* "You don't love me anymore." Few statements hurt so much. The one who says it feels unloved. The one who hears it feels accused. These words hurt because they point to a relationship gone bad.

As sinners, we weren't born into a good relationship with God. We were born dead in sin and enemies of God. This is a defect in us that we can't get over. No matter how hard I try, I cannot dunk a basketball. It is a physical impossibility for someone of my stature. It is just as impossible for us to get over our hatred of God and choose him.

Martin Luther confessed, "I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God." (Luther's Works, Vol. 34, p. 336) The apostle Paul put it this way: "The sinful mind is hostile to God." (Romans 8:7) We began life as God-haters. Even as babies, we failed to see our utter sinfulness and refused to worship the true God. We were God's enemies. We had and still have nothing of ourselves to attract God's love. But that is what makes God's love so unique, so special. We humans love things because they are lovely. God loved us because he is lovely. So, Jesus tells us that he chose us. He chose us, not because we are lovely, but because he is. He chose us to be his friends.

Joseph Scriven, the man who wrote "What A Friend We Have in Jesus," was born in 1819 in Ireland. Things seemed to go well in his life until he became engaged. The evening before the wedding, his bride drowned. Scriven moved to Port Hope, Ontario, where he became engaged again. But tragedy struck once more when his bride became ill and died just before the wedding. When, in 1855, his mother in Ireland became sick, Scriven wrote the words of "What A Friend We Have in Jesus."

Why would he write such a hymn when his life as an adult had been marred by tragedy? Had Jesus really been a friend to him? Has Jesus been a friend to you? (Daniel Habben) It might not always feel like it, but that's Jesus' promise to us here.

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. What would it be like to have a friend in the President's office? You would be the first to learn of the kind of decisions the leaders of our country are making, decisions that could affect your life. When Jesus says that he has made known to us everything the Father made known to him, he's saying that we have inside knowledge of the kind of things that affect not only everyday life, but also eternal life. For example, we know the Father has planned to work everything, even sadness and pain, for the good of believers. We also know what he has planned for the end of the world. We might not know when the end will come, but we do know how we can be ready for the end – by being friends with Jesus.

How are we friends with Jesus? *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.* To obey Jesus' commands or divine principles means to accept them as true, submit to them in faith, and carry them out in life by doing them, by teaching them, by defending them. Obedience demonstrates not only acceptance of Jesus' commands but trusting acceptance of Jesus himself. Accepting what Jesus says shows that we are his friends. Do others see that?

We have seen God in the face of Jesus. We have known his mercy and grace. We have basked in the warmth of his love. We have gloried in the assurance we have in our eternal salvation. We have been to the cross and we have been to the empty tomb and we eagerly await Jesus' return. Can people see that we have been there? Do they know we are friends of Jesus? Can they read it on our faces and in our lives?

Do people see the confidence you have in God's love? When we suffer hardship, we can say, "I know that whatever happens to me, God still loves me. He can never stop loving me." When laying on our deathbed, we can say, "I know that Jesus will be waiting for me and I have nothing to fear." When we are worried about something, we can still say, "But I know God is watching over me and I am safe in his hands." We can show we are friends of Jesus by the confidence we have in his love.

Confident in his love, we can also love each other. *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* A man was once trying to butter up his wife. He was telling her how much he loved her and how much she meant to him. He boasted that he would even die for her. Unimpressed by his talk, she said, "That won't be necessary. Just pick up a towel and help me with the dishes." The point is, of course, that we can talk all we want about our love for Jesus and what a friend we have in Jesus, but how does that show in daily life? What does being a Christian mean to you in day to day living?

Martin Luther put it this way: "You are not to sit still without fruit and good works; but you are to come into the open and let other people benefit from you and also gain from your message, confession, service, and help. Thus they can surely see that your faith is genuine." (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 24, p. 262) In school we learned our pronouns by saying first person, "I", second person, "you", third person, "he, she, it." Christian love turns that around. First person is He, that is, God. Second person is you, that is, your fellow believer. Third person is "I", that is, yourself. Love puts self last.

How do we show love for others? Most of all, by helping each other stay friends with Christ. Outside of God's Word itself and a person's family, you may be the most important influence on keeping someone close to Christ. That may mean stepping up to the plate and intervening when someone is drifting from Christ. That may mean taking time out of your day to listen to their problems. It may mean helping in some other way.

We started out by saying that Christianity is a love/hate relationship. We entered this world hating God, hating Jesus and everything to do with him. But Jesus loved us out of death, out of sin, out of hatred. He loved us into life, into faith and into love of him and each other. With Jesus, Christianity is really a love/love relationship.