**Authentic Love**

*John 13:34-35* A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

**Illustration: Greatest Football Game Ever**

It happened on a Sunday afternoon in the late 80's or early 90's when Don Criqui was the announcer for NFL football.

- On that day the Green Bay Packers were getting ready to play the Chicago Bears.
  - Don Criqui had the legendary Green Bay coach, Vince Lombardi in a pregame interview.

- It was the typical gameday interview in which they discussed strategies for the game and the various facets of what would unfold that afternoon.
  - Near the end of the discussion Don Criqui turned to the Vice President of Chrysler Corporation, who, at the time, was the leading sponsor of NFL football
    - and asked the vice president if he had any questions for Mr. Lombardi.

The Chrysler rep proceeded to ask this question.

- He said, Coach Lombardi, I have seen the breakdown of these two teams,
  - I've looked over the stats
  - and, Mr. Lombardi, your team is outclassed today.

- The Bears have you beat at almost every position.
  - They've got the better quarterback,
  - they've got the better wide receivers,
  - they've got the better offensive line
  - and they've got the better defense.

- In every aspect of this game,
  - at every position besides running back,
    - the Bears are bigger,
    - they are faster
    - and they are just flat out better than your team.

  - Today the Green Bay Packers are outmanned and outclassed.

- Coach Lombardi, here's my question:
  - How do you get 40 grown men to strap on their pads, put on their helmets and march out on that field today against impossible odds?
    - You can't possibly hope to be better than this team,
    - you can't begin to think that you're going to win today.

  - How do you get 40 men to pour out their blood, sweat, and guts for a solid hour tonight with no real chance of victory?
Mr Lombardi’s reply was worth repeating here tonight.
• He said, That’s simple.
  o In Green Bay we have a team philosophy.
• We believe that someday the greatest football game in all the world is going to be played.
  o Somewhere in the history and sports annals it is going to be recorded that the greatest game that has ever been played has finally been played.
• That game has not YET been played, but one day it will be played.
  o We have made up our minds that the Green Bay Packers are going to go down in history as one of the teams that played in that great game.
  ▪ Furthermore, he said, we have decided that since we are going to play in that game, we might as well win that game.
  o We have determined that when history records the greatest game of football that has ever been played that the Green Bay Packers are going to be recorded as the winners of that game.

The Chrysler rep broke in and asked,
• I understand that philosophy, Coach, but what does that have to do with today’s game?
• Vince Lombardi looked him in the eyes and said,
  o There are 40 men walking out on that field this afternoon that believe that today is the day that that game is going to be played!

Authentic Church

I come to this pulpit tonight to tell you that the greatest revival that this world has ever seen has not yet taken place.
• Somewhere there is going to be recorded in the annals of spiritual history,
  o in the continuing record of the Acts of the apostles,
    ▪ that the greatest revival that ever occurred has finally taken place.
• When that happens there will be a church,
  o an authentic book of Acts church,
    ▪ that will have been the catalyst for that great revival.
• I believe that it is high time that we decided that THIS WIL BE THAT CHURCH!
  o Tonight could be the night that heaven begins to record the beginning of the greatest revival of apostolic truth that this world has ever seen.
• Lake City can be the place where a revival that causes Azusa Street to pale in comparison is born.
  o This humble house of God could become the chamber that births a mighty move of the Holy Ghost,
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

where spiritual fire and wind sweeps our world and an unprecedented revival is loosed!

I don’t have all of the answers tonight, but I do feel like I have one of the keys to that great revival that will be birthed by this church!

- As we kick off the month of February, we return to our theme for the year.
  - If we are going to be an authentic church then there must be an authentic sacrifice.
    - For the last 21 days of January we focused on that sacrifice, an authentic sacrifice.
  - Tonight we turn our focus in another direction, but let me say that this doesn’t mean we are leaving the altar of sacrifice.
    - If we are going to be an authentic church then there must be a continual abiding of a spirit of sacrifice.
  - These 12 themes that we are using this year are not intended to be progressive steps
    - where you move from one to the other
    - but rather a progressive revelation of what kind of church we need to be.
- Tonight we add love to sacrifice.
  - Tonight we turn our attention towards what it means when an authentic church has authentic love.
- Because, if we are going to be that church,
  - if we are going to birth that kind of move of God,
    - I am firmly convinced that a key component of an authentic church is that it is a church that loves people.
      - A church that loves the lost.
      - A church that loves its own.
  - You don’t have to love the world to love those that are in the world.
    - You don’t have to love the sin to love the sinner.
- If we are going to see the kind of move of God that I believe that we will see,
  - we must realize that we need a revival of love in our midst!

A Revival of Love

For too long, there’s been too much division and backstabbing, and personal destruction in the church.

- For too long sanctified, holier than thou church folks have looked down their noses at a lost world in pity and disgust!
  - Paul said it best, except for the grace of God, you and I would be just like them!
    - It’s time we let a love be birthed in our souls.
  - A love for our brothers and sisters,
    - a love for the world,
    - a love for the church
and a love for the lost!

- We need a revival of LOVE!
  - They aren't going to line up at our door for a chance to be a part of a community that is divided among itself,
    - broken up into little cliques and constantly warring within.
  - We need to get back to what it means to be the body of Christ.
    - We are the church.
    - We are family.
    - We are called by the same name, washed in the same blood.
  - It’s high time we had a revival of the Holy Ghost, a revival of the love of God.
- Paul said, in Romans 5:5 that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
  - If you have been filled with the Holy Ghost, then the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart!
    - It’s high time we let it work!

This church was founded in extraordinary love.
- This church was born because of the sacrifice of the cross.
  - John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
- God so loved the world!
  - Let me tell you what the cross is all about.
    - Its about more than just mercy and grace,
    - its about more than just judgment averted and pardon issued.
    - Its about more than just the fulfillment of the law and the breaking of sin’s chains.
      - The cross is all about love!
- Romans 5:6 says that For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
  - Verse 8 says it even plainer, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!
- I’m talking about unqualified love, unearned love, undeserved love –
  - we didn’t earn it, we couldn’t justify it, we weren’t good enough –
    - but the love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts is an unending love,
      - its an unrestrained love,
      - its an incomprehensible love.
- While we were yet sinners,
  - while we were yet lost,
  - while our lives were a wreck,
  - while we were bound and oppressed,
  - when we were wrapped up in our own rebellion –
    - GOD LOVED US!
• And that’s the kind of love that he has called his church to.
  o Authentic love!

Fulfilling the Law

In the 22nd chapter of Matthew the Pharisees attempted to trap trick Jesus into saying something that they could use to condemn him.
  • An expert in the law approached Jesus and asked him a question that, on the face of it, seems simple
    o but, in truth, stood at the heart of a fiercely contested debate of the day.
  • The Jews had taken the law that God gave thru Moses and had constructed it into a complex legalistic system of self-righteousness based upon the fulfillment of the grossly exaggerated law that they had constructed.
    o One of their continual debates had to do with ranking the laws in order of importance.
  • So the lawyer brings the question to Jesus, believing that any answer will be divisive
    o and with Jesus’ radical approach to the law, perhaps he will incriminate himself with his answer.

He says, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
  • But Jesus handles their question with a skill and mastery of the law that could only come from one who is intimately familiar with the law.
    o From the mouth of the law-giver comes the most incredible revelation of the whole intent of the law.
  • Cutting thru the legalism
    o and stepping around the self righteousness that these holier than thou hypocrites had clothed themselves in
      ▪ Jesus gives a direct interpretation of the law.
  • He starts by quoting from the Shemma, in Deuteronomy 6:5.
    o “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

This is the first and great commandment, He says.
  • In a single instant he turns the focus away from the supposed righteousness of his accusers and puts it back where it belongs, on loving God.
  • Basically he was saying, if you are going to fulfill the law, then you must LOVE God with every aspect of your being.
  •
    o Already then, the Pharisees have gotten more than they bargained for,
      ▪ because if they measure themselves by this version of the law, rather than by their well rehearsed self-justifications, then they will come up sorely lacking!
But Jesus doesn’t stop there.

- As understanding dawns, and convictions seeks out the heart of his antagonists, He goes a step further.
  - He says, And the second is like unto it,
  - Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
  - Loving God, Jesus says, will cause you to love people!
- The Pharisees are the most hateful crowd in the world,
  - they are full of pride and self-righteousness,
  - but make no mistake about it – they love themselves!
  - They are proud of themselves.
- Jesus turns the tables.
  - He says, you need to love God with everything you have
  - and you need to love others with the same great love by which you love yourself!
- By now they must realize that they’ve gotten more than they bargained for.
  - In two simple statements, Jesus has revolutionized the concept of the law.
  - But Jesus isn’t done yet!
  - He’s about to demonstrate his genuine mastery of the law.

He’s the one that gave the law,

- his finger penned it into tablets of stone,
  - he knows the letter of the law,
  - but he also knows the full intent of the law.
- And in that powerful moment,
  - the giver of the law, gives an unprecedented understanding of the law!
- In verse 40 he says,
  - On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
- In other words, all other commandments are summed up in these two simple statements of Jesus.
  - Love God.
  - Love people.
  - It’s that simple.
- On the mountaintop God gave ten commandments to Moses,
  - every one of them is contained in these two simple statements pertaining to love.

- Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.
  - Love God.
- Thou shalt make no graven images.
  - Love God.
- Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.
  - Love God.
- Thou shalt remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
Authentic Love

- Love God.

- Thou shalt not kill.
  - Love people.

- Thou shalt not commit adultery.
  - Love people.

- Thou shalt not steal.
  - Love people.

- Thou shalt not lie.
  - Love people.

- Thou shalt not covet.
  - Love people.

- Honor thy mother and father.
  - Love people.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

- Love God.
- Love people.
  - Do you want to have an authentic church?
    - Love God.
    - Love people.
  - Do you want to be an authentic Christian?
    - Love God.
    - Love people.
  - Do we want to be the church that gives birth to the greatest move of God ever?
    - Love God.
    - Love people.

- On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

This is a truth that Paul understood when he wrote in Romans 13:8-10 commanding the church to

- “love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
- For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely,
- Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”
- All of the law hangs on these two simple yet profound commandments:
  - Love God. Love people.
  - The defining characteristic of an authentic church will be authentic love!
  - The culture of that church will be dominated by love, not a love for self but a love for God and a love for others!

Selfless Love
Self-love is the foundation of sin.

- Sin is all about loving yourself more than you love others.
  - The cardinal rule of sin is to look out for number one.
  - Make sure that you are taken care of ahead of everyone and everything else.
    - That's the kind of love that carnality understands,
    - that's the kind of love that flesh thrives in.
      - Love yourself.
      - Take care of yourself.
      - Watch out for yourself.
      - Make sure that your interests are protected.
      - Make sure that you get what’s coming to you!
  - It’s a self serving, self exalting kind of love.
    - That’s the only kind of love that hell knows.
      - Love that serves its own interests.
      - Love that promotes its own success.
  - Hell is going to be full of folks that loved themselves, because self-love is the justification for all sin.
    - It’s a selfish love.

From the time that the law was given, all the way to the time that the church was established

- humanity struggled to fulfill the law
  - but never succeeded because the focus was always self centered.
    - They were trying to promote themselves.
    - They were trying to elevate themselves.
    - They were trying to establish their own righteousness.
      - It was all self-centered.
  - But Jesus introduced a new dynamic.
    - Instead of selfish love, His life and his teachings exhibited self-less love.
    - His message to His disciples and to all that would follow him was to lay down your self-interests and take up your cross.
  - In a simple yet profound way, he addressed the continual struggle with the law thru an empowering revelation.
    - He would live a life that would demonstrate a simple principle:
      - By loving other as you would love yourself you will fulfill the law!
  - If you get the focus off of you,
    - if somehow you can shift your self-love into selfless love
      - you will find yourself fulfilling the law!
  - Think about it.
    - Selfishness gives rise to lying, cheating, killing, stealing –
      - its all about a selfish desire.
• But when you love others as you would love yourself,
  o then, in the words of Paul, “Love is the fulfilling of the law!”

This is why it’s so important.
• Authentic love isn’t just a theme that goes well with February – it’s the secret to success in the kingdom of God.
  o It’s the key to revival, it’s the key to opening up fountains of blessing!
    ▪ All the law, all the prophets,
    ● everything hinges on a simple concept – LOVE!

Authentic Love

Let bring it back to our text tonight:
• In John 13:34, Jesus made a profound statement:
  o A new commandment I give unto you.
    ▪ What does he mean by this?
    ▪ Do we need to get out a stone and chisel and go transform the original law from 10 commandments to 11?
  o Not at all.
• The word “new” that is used here is indicative of a “fresh” commandment not a “recent” or “different” commandment.
  o It’s the opposite of “worn out”
    ▪ it is “fresh”.
• What Jesus said was let me give you a fresh understanding of the commandments.
  o Let me reveal to you a fresh insight into the law:
    ▪ Love one another!
    ▪ As I have loved you, love one another.
• It was a defining moment for the church that was about to be born in an upper room just 7 weeks later.
  o It became the pivotal truth that defined the fellowship of the cross.
    ▪ That early church understood it as the foundational commandment of the church.
    ▪ It was repeated over and over again in the New Testament from Romans and Galatians to Hebrews and Philemon.
  o James called it the royal law
    ▪ and John emphasized it repeatedly,
    ▪ writing in 2nd John verses 5 --
      • And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

This commandment was foundational to the church because of the next thing that Jesus said:
• By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
  o Authentic love.
    ▪ It’s what defines the church!
• This is how the world will know that you are the true church.
  o Not by your buildings.
  o Not by your sign or your name.
    ▪ Not even by your doctrine or your worship.
• They will first recognize you by your LOVE!
  o True Christianity is lived out of a pure and loving heart
    ▪ and is manifest in the way believers talk
    ▪ and by the way they act.
• It is manifested by how they love and care for those who are in need,
  o not by how they love and care for those they prefer,
  o or those who are close to them,
  o or those with whom they share common traits and interests.
    ▪ True biblical love,
    ▪ authentic Godly love,
    ▪ is shown by how we love those who may never love us in return!
  o They will know you by your love!
• Love is the central and most visible manifestation of the New Testament Church.
  o By your love.
    ▪ An authentic church will demonstrate authentic love!

God Revealed

John declares, in 1 John 4:7-12,
• “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love…”

• Him?
  o Right?
  o One would expect that to be the logical end of that statement.
• If God so loved us, then we should love him back.
  o But that’s not what it says! It says:

• Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!

• What a powerful statement!
As God so loved us, we also should love others!
- God demonstrated his great love to us.
  - He robed himself in flesh and died for our sins.
- So also, we should demonstrate our love for him by taking up our cross and walking in his footsteps,
  - putting others before ourselves!
    - We ought also to love one another!!!!

But John isn’t done yet.
- Watch this.
  - The same one who wrote of Jesus in John 1:18 saying:
    - No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
    - Expressing the truth that the invisible God was made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ,
  - now takes up his pen under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and writes of the church in 1 John 4:12:
    - No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

God was seen in Christ by a extraordinary demonstration of his love.
- And by that same measure, God is seen in His church, He is seen in us, in our lives, by a demonstration of his LOVE!
  - By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Close

1 John 3:16-19 says:
- Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. 19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Authentic love is more than just words it is deeds.
- Authentic love is more than just an emotion it’s a church in motion.
  - Authentic love is about Loving God and Loving others.
  - Its about pledging to lay ourselves aside for others,
    - to love when there is no love returned,
    - to show compassion instead of judgement,
    - to show grace and mercy instead of pride and self-righteousness,
    - to love others as we would love ourselves!
• This is the fulfillment of all the law!
  o This is Authentic Love!

I can't preach this kind of a message and make an appeal for this kind of love without making a commitment for this church to love like it has been loved.

• We have received unconditional love from God.
  o It is time we gave back from the abundance with which we have been blessed.
• On Tuesday night, Feb. 21st we are scheduled to conduct a service at the Lake City Nursing home.
  o We are going to love those who may never love us back!
  o We are going to give of ourselves to those who may never give back.
    ▪ This church will put love on display because it is by our love that they will know that we are His disciples!

But this is just a starting place!

• If I can borrow from Vince Lombardi, we need to adopt a philosophy tonight.
  o Somewhere in the annals of church history it will be recorded that there was church that demonstrated exactly what it means to show the kind of love that you have received from God.
    ▪ It will be recorded in the record book of heaven that there were a people that learned what it means to Love God and to love people.
  o That church is going to have an unprecedented revival.
• We need to determine right here and right now that this church is going to be that church!
  o We will be an authentic church!
    ▪ We will love God and love people.
    ▪ We will be authentic Christians.
    ▪ We will demonstrate the love of God.
• He who has never been seen by any man will be seen in this church thru its love!
  o That's what it means to have authentic love!
• We need a revival of authentic love in our hearts and our lives.
  o We need a revival of the kind of love that carried Jesus to the cross!
• Is there anyone tonight that would come and say:
  o I will lay down my life and take up His cross?