

October 23, 2011
Matthew 22:34-40

Pentecost 19 (Proper 25A)
Discipleship: All About Love

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we continue our series on Discipleship. Today we look at the conversation about the greatest command...and how it is all about love.

Love is what forms our roles as discipleship. Really discipleship is all about love. Think of it in this way: "A class of little girls was learning to spell. They spelled a number of small words, such as "pig," "cat," "dog," "cow," and amused themselves by making the sounds the animals make. Then one of the little girls whose name was Mary was asked to spell "love." She didn't stop to give the letters, but ran and threw her arms around the teacher's neck and kissed her on the cheek. "We spell 'love' that way at our house," she said. The girls laughed, but the teacher said, "That is a beautiful way; but do you know another way to spell 'love'?" "Oh, yes," cried Mary, "I spell love this way," and she began to put the books in order on her teacher's desk. "I spell love by helping everybody when they need me."

Love is what being a disciple is all about. That's what Jesus was trying to get at here in this yet another conversation with the Pharisees during the final week before his crucifixion. "What is the greatest commandment?" At Mount Sinai God gave us 10, but yet the Pharisees have nitpicked to the point of having over 613 commandments. Jesus didn't have to think too long to answer, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*"

These words are not a gospel statement...they are definitely a law statement, telling us what to do, telling us to love God and then love our neighbor. And you know...that's what discipleship is all about, loving God with your whole self above all other things. Love God with your whole more than you love your spouse, children, other family, friends, your job, school, sports, etc. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. It's what we are called to do as his disciples.

How does this look in your life as disciples? It means giving up of your selves when the Lord calls you to serve God. It might even mean sacrificing that you deem important in your life...maybe it's the starting spot on the football team, maybe it's a relationship with a friend, and maybe it's a job that doesn't allow you to come to worship. What did the disciples do when they were called by Jesus...some of them left their livelihoods to follow after Jesus? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. That means loving God 100% of the time with your whole self.

But Pastor, we can't do that. Is probably what you are thinking. And you are right...you can't, you are all sinners...but it is something that we strive for. We should strive to be

disciples that work for the Lord. It's just one of those things that God has chosen us to do.

Discipleship though isn't all about loving God...it's also about loving your neighbor. Your neighbor includes everything that is around you, whether it be your husband or wife, your son or daughter, your mother or father, your brother or sister, your friend or your enemy. God commands you to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Now that is something that is almost impossible for us to do. Take it we are a self-centered culture. It's a me first society. We want what is best for me! Not anyone else!

Our selfishness can be seen for miles around. IT is frankly what we are good at. I have got to be the best. I have to make the most money. I have to get the promotion before my coworker. I have to have the top kids-academically, socially, and athletically. But that's really not love for your neighbor.

I came across a story out of Iowa that depicted true love for your neighbor. Really a love that God has for you that we are called to emulate. It's a story about a couple that was married for 72 years. They died last week an hour apart of each other while they were holding hands. This story comes from KCCI TV website out of Iowa. "Family said, the story of Gordon and Norma Yeager is a real-life love story. On the day she graduated from high school, Norma Stock promised to spend forever with Gordon Yaeger. The couple got married on May 26, 1939.

"They're very old-fashioned. They believed in marriage till death do you part," said son Dennis Yeager.

The couple was blessed with four children. The oldest Donna said, "Staying together for 72 years is good, I'd say that's exceptional." The way the kids tell it, dad was the life of the party, while mom kept everything together.

"Anybody come over---she was the hostess with the moistest. She just seriously---the more she did---the more she smiled," said Dennis Yeager. "Dad would be the center of attention, like, 'Weee look at me' and mom was like 'get him away from me!' You know we even got a picture like that."

Norma didn't really want the distance and family said she hardly left Gordon's side for 72 years. "They just loved being together. Everybody argues once in awhile, but they still, he said "I have to stick around. I can't go until she does because I have to stay here for her and she would say the same thing." Said Dennis Yeager.

Last Wednesday the couple left home to go to the story in town, but they didn't make it. They were involved in an accident and were transported to the ICU of Marshalltown's hospital.

"They brought them in the same room in intensive care and put them together---and they were holding hands in ICU. They were not really responsive," said Dennis.

Gordon died at 3:38 pm holding hands with his wife as the family they built surrounded them.

“It was really strange, they were holding hands, and dad stopped breathing but I couldn’t figure out what was going on because the heart monitor was still going,” said Dennis. “But we were like, he isn’t breathing. How does he still have a heart beat? The nurse checked and said that’s because they were holding hands and its going through them. Her heart was beating through him and picking it up.”

“They were still getting her heartbeat through him.” said Daughter Donna.

At 4:38 pm exactly one hour after Gordon died, Norma passed too.

“Neither of them would’ve wanted to be without each other. I couldn’t figure out how it was going to work,” said Donna. “We were very blessed, honestly, that they went this way.”

“They just loved being together,” said Dennis.

This story is amazing. Norma’s was beating through him and his heart monitor was picking it up. Their love for each other lasted a lifetime.

Love for your neighbor is expounded when our heart beats through them. It’s what we as disciples are called to do. But we can’t do that on our own, it is Jesus Christ who came to this earth that makes us grow and love. It’s because that through Jesus’ own heartbeat we have life. It’s through his own gruesome death that we have life. It is through his life that we have life.

Christ carries out, he holds us in the palm of his hands and because of that his love is flowing through us and the heart monitor is picking it up. It’s an amazing fact of how much God loves us. Our heart monitor is God the Father and if we aren’t connected to Jesus, then we’d be flatlined and in grave danger. But through Jesus our Savior, God sees a someone that is forgiven and living in him.

It’s really all about love. This discipleship thing is really all about love. That’s what God has called and commanded us to do...love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind...and then Love your neighbor as yourself.”

In the name of Jesus. Amen

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.