

Loving Like Jesus, part 4 of Easter Response
April 19, 2015

This series of sermons has been about how we are to respond to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Your response is of utmost importance because how you respond will affect what happens to you after death.

Our initial response must be to believe in Jesus, in all He said and did. Then we must repent, that is, we must turn away from living for self and turn to living for Jesus. We then are baptized in His name as a public demonstration of our submission to Him. Last week we considered prayer, informed by the Holy Spirit, as part of our response. It is in prayer that we treat God as God. We will wrap up this series next week.

As we begin this morning, I have a puzzle for you. Look at the four sentences on the screen and tell me what they have in common?

We say things like,

"I love ice cream, because it cools me and tastes so good to me."

"I love my friends, because they like to do things with me."

"I love my toys, because they belong to me."

"I love this song, because it sounds good to me."

Who is the focus of all these statements? Me! The focus of these statements is me.

How many of you saw the movie Finding Nemo? For those of you who don't know, Nemo is a fish. And his father, named Marlin, spends most of the movie looking for Nemo. At one point in the movie we see Marlin and a friend fall on a wooden pier in the harbor, surrounded by boats. So he is a fish out of water and can't move too well. And surrounding him on the boats and looking at him are seagulls. The seagulls all want to eat Marlin, the fish. And the seagulls don't want to share Marlin with each other. They don't care about each other. They only care about themselves. And they all claim Marlin for themselves by calling out, "Mine, Mine, Mine."

There are lots of times that we care only about ourselves. We use the word love to speak about ourselves. We say, "I love ice cream, because it tastes good to me." It sounds like we are talking about ice cream. But we are really talking about me. We can even do this when we say, "I love you," to other people. "I love you because you do nice things for me."

Like the seagulls, we care most about ourselves and not others. Jesus is the opposite. Jesus cares more about us than about Himself. That's why He died for us.

When you say you love something because of how it makes you feel, that is a poor way of using the word love. I love this because it helps me, or benefits me, or makes me smile, or makes me feel good. This is poor way of using the word love.

This morning Jesus wants us to use the word love in a different way. He wants us to use the word love in a better way. He wants us to use the word love like He uses the word love.

John 13:1-5 (NIV) It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

If Jesus and His disciples had been invited guests to someone else's home, their host would have had someone wash their feet. If you were invited to a party this afternoon and you had taken a bath, you would be clean. But if you were wearing sandals or flipflops your feet might get dirty by the time you got to the party. If you were going to a party in Bible days, your feet would be dirty because the streets were dirty and dusty. So it was the custom for the host to have someone at the door to wash your feet. Usually a servant did this dirty work.

But Jesus and His disciples had not been invited to a party. This was a rented hall. They were their own hosts. So no one had washed their feet. They did not wash their own feet. The disciples certainly were not going to humble themselves to wash each other's feet. But Jesus did.

John 13:12-17 (NIV) When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

If someone as important as Jesus washed their feet, then they should wash each other's feet. That is what Jesus tells them to do. But this was a demonstration of what He REALLY wanted them to do. A few minutes later at this gathering we read the following.

John 13:34-35 (NIV) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The command to love your neighbor was as old as Moses in the Old Testament. What is new is the personal element. Neighbor was a bit non-specific. Jesus is very specific. "Love each other." His disciples had not been loving each other. Up to this point they had been competing with each other. They were all wanting to be the chief disciple. They were all thinking about how to get ahead of the other disciples. They were all thinking only about themselves. Jesus tells them to start thinking about each other and loving each other.

Jesus also said for them to love each other as He had loved them. Jesus is the example of this love for each other. The way Jesus loved is the measurement of this love.

You and I know that Jesus will love them by going to the cross. But notice He says to love each other as He has already loved them. They had been with Jesus about three years. And all through that time Jesus had loved them. He had treated them with infinite patience in all of their competition with each other, their lack of understanding, and their lack of faith. Through it all He accepted them, taught them, trained them, protected them, and cared for each one. He loved them as He was now telling them to love each other. Jesus demonstrated a love that none of them had towards each other.

Jesus wanted them to think about love in a new way. When I say I love someone because of how they make me feel, I am thinking about me. But Jesus' love is thinking about the other person.

Selfish love is about me. Jesus' love is about someone else.

Jesus' love is focused on what the other person needs. Jesus' love wants to help the other person. Selfish love asks, "What can the other person do to help me?" Jesus' love asks, "What can I do to help the other person?"

This is a good use of the word love. This is a mature use of the word love. This is a Christian use of the word love. A mature love is focused on the other person, not on me. Jesus' love asks these kinds of questions:

What is best for that person?

What does that person need?

How can I help that person?

When I tell my son I love him, I mean that I want what is best for HIM. I want health for HIM. I want wisdom for HIM. I want good things for HIM.

Jesus thought this way about love. Jesus lived this use of the word love. Today Jesus speaks these words to us, too. Jesus is expecting us to make a response to His life, death, and resurrection that includes loving each other as He loves us.

In response to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus you believe and you must continue to believe. You must re-affirm your faith everyday. You turned from self to Jesus, and you must continue to do so everyday. You identified publicly with Jesus everyday. And you must continue to do so by loving each other as Jesus loves you.

John 13:35 (NIV) By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

We need to build a reputation in the community, but not as biggest church, or the coolest church, or the church with the best building, or the newest sign, or the best choir, or the most fun church. Jesus wants us to strive to be the most loving church. It is not that we are to compete with other churches. Every church should want to be the most loving church.

We are told fifty times in the New Testament to love each other. The New Testament speaks more about loving each other than about any other subject. This is the priority for the Christian life. This is the priority for when we come together as a church.

We can all love others. You teens can love others. You kids can love others. But just liking someone is not love. Love cares about what is best for the other person. Sin says me, me, me, mine, mine, mine. Love says you, you, you.

What Can We Do to Become More Loving People?

- Get to know each other.
- Ask questions, listen closely, and remember. Write things down. Pray for the person.
- Ask, "How can I help you". Help in any way you can.
- Be a friend who contacts outside of "at the church".

When someone at school or at work or a neighbor tells you about a problem he or she is having,

- **Ask, "How can I help you?"** Help them if they give you a suggestion. And if they say, "Thanks, but there is nothing you can do about it," then...
- **Offer to pray for them.** Tell them, "Well I can take your problem to Jesus. He can help." Offer to pray with them right then. And if they agree, then do so.
- **Write their need down and pray for them at home.**
- **Follow up.** Ask them about the problem the next time you see them, and assure them you are praying about their need.

Let us love as Jesus loves. He is still loving us because He rose from the dead and ascended up into heaven. He is alive. Jesus is loving us today. We can love others with Him.

This helping love is the kind of love God has for us. Look at what the next verse says about God's love.

John 3:16 (NIV) *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

I want you to see four facts in this verse.

1. God loves us.

2. God loves us a lot. Note that it says God so loved. The sentence did not need that extra word. It could have just said, "God loved the world..." But God added the so because He loves us tremendously. God loves us a lot.

3. Thinking of our need, God gave us a Savior.

4. By faith in the Savior, we can receive eternal life.

This verse doesn't tell us all the facts. It does not say why we need a Savior. You have been learning about sin. You know that we need a savior because of our sin. God SOOOO loved the world that He gave us a Savior. That is what this love does, it helps meet a need. Love seeks the best for others. God knew we needed a Savior, more than anything else in the universe. And so God provided us a Savior. Won't you put your faith in the Savior today?