

“Love Commandment”, John 15:9-17 (05/16/2021)

(Slide 1) Many of you may know Dwight L. Moody. He was a missionary who led a great revival in the United States in the 19th Century. He still is the talk of the whole world by many preachers. Personally, I am also a fan of missionary Moody, so when I came to Evanston, IL to study in seminary, I first visited the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. One day, Moody had a chance to go to England to lead a revival assembly, so he visited Charles H. Spurgeon whom he had admired for a long time, and who still is called a king of the preachers. It was a big event! The greatest revivalist and preacher met.

(Slide 2) When Moody first met Spurgeon, he was very surprised and disappointed with Spurgeon, because there was a pipe in his mouth. So, Moody asked him, “How can a Christian smoke? You, who are even a great preacher?” Then, Spurgeon said to him “Oh man, look at your big belly, is it ok to have that as a Christian?” This fun story shows us that the standard of judging others- condemnation is different from culture to culture. Still in America some conservative denominations regard smoking and drinking as sin but churches in Europe, including England, have a very generous understanding of drinking and smoking. Because they think it is not a matter of faith but a matter of personal health. Instead, they regard gluttony as sin.

(Slide 3) Based on the long Christian history in Europe, among all human sin they have taught that there are seven deadly sins, which are Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, and Pride. Is there anyone who can proudly say that they are sin free based on these seven deadly sins? Moody’s big fat belly can symbolize sin in the eyes of a European Christian. This may show us why so many European Christians, including famous ministers and theologians, love smoking and drinking just as many American Christians love food and eating? Then, here is one more to think about. Do you think there is one certain common character in Christianity regardless of any differences in cultures and regions? What is the essence of Christianity, which no one in the world

doubts?

(Slide 4) Today's gospel scripture talks about the essence of Christianity. It is love shown by Jesus Christ. Love is the commandment that we – Christians - should obey and love is the goal of life that we should live for. As disciples, followers, believers, we should keep the love commandment of Jesus Christ, which is love God and love our neighbors. Indeed, to live by loving one another is the most important requirement for all of the Christians in the world. Although every Christian easily remembers this love commandment, because we have heard it countless times in church, not many of us actually live it out in our daily lives. Often times we forget it and sometimes we pretend to forget it.

However, when we look at the life of Jesus Christ, he not only gave us this love commandment – love God and love our neighbors – but also, he actually lived it out throughout his ministry and life. First of all, Jesus came to this world because God loved us so much. Because of love, he came to us though he didn't need to. God does not have any reason to become a human to love humans. Therefore, his love is so unique and special. If you fall in love, you want to be like your loved one. So, in psychology, there is “mirroring effect” which means if you like someone, then you are unconsciously mirroring his/her actions, manner, and way of speaking. This is common in humanity. God did not want to stay as the One who is always far away from us, invisible, and intangible, so he came to this world and became like us to understand, to serve, and to love us. As one of us, he served and loved all alienated people - lepers, orphans, widows, and even Judas and Pilate. Therefore, we - the followers of Jesus Christ are called to join his love, but not by just having warm, loving feelings or even actions we regard as loving. We are to love as Christ loved us, so we measure and shape our love after the kind of love Christ had for us, and for everyone.

(Slide 5) Do you know Jean Vanier? He is a Canadian philosopher, theologian, and active lover. In 1964 he founded the “L'arche

Community,” which serves people with developmental disabilities, and in 1971 he founded “Faith and Light,” which is a Christian Charity that serves people with developmental disabilities and their families with Marie-Hélène Mathieu. According to Jean Vanier, “To love people as Jesus loves them is to wash their feet, to serve them in humility; it is to help them rise up in truth and love. To love is to lay down one’s life for others, to place their interests before our own. It is to reveal to them that they are loved by Jesus.”

(Slide 6) I remember my first official family vacation with baby Caleb. My first thought was that Caleb is so blessed to have us as parents. My first flight experience was when I was a junior in high school for a school trip. But 11-month-old baby Caleb had an opportunity to get on a plane. I even bought a new swimsuit and inflatable baby float for Caleb. Isn’t that amazing? In my book, I prepared all the best for him. Providing as best as I can is the way I show that I love him. Since everything was perfectly prepared to my standard, I thought that he would be fine and just enjoy. However, that was a misjudgment on my part. He did not like getting on the plane at all, and he did not like swimming with his swimsuit and baby float. He just wanted to play in the bathtub, splashing water with his hands, rather than floating in the swimming pool. Although I prepared all the best, in his book, it was nothing. From this vacation, I learned that to love is to not insist on my best, but to listen to others interests and needs and place them before my own. Then they feel that they are loved by me in the best way.

(Slide 7) 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 teaches us what is love: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” To love is not to insist on me, it is accepting others as they are. Jesus never insisted nor forced people. He just understood us, accepted us, forgave us, and loved us as we are. This is how Jesus taught us love, and this is the way that

we need to follow when we love one another. There are various differences in us, because God created us all differently. Everyone sees and lives with different thoughts and different standards. Nevertheless, how can we – all different people in the church – be one body of Christ? Because of love we can be one in Jesus Christ. Only his love binds us with him, and one with each other. Our Lord Jesus Christ just embraced us, including all our sins, our faults, our wounds, and he covered all of them with his love and light. When we live by loving God and loving our neighbors, we are bound to each other in his love.

Last week was communion Sunday. His amazing love is greatly revealed in his table as he gave his body and blood for us. Even though we don't have a communion this week, we need to join in and remember the meaning of holy communion spiritually every day as Christians. Let us remind ourselves where we are. Do we stand in his love? Are we bound in his love? Where are we as individuals? Let us come to him as we are, and remember he chose us and called us to love one another.

Praise God. Amen.