

Loving One Another

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, I'm going to read from John chapter 13 and from verse 31 to verse 38. Okay.

John chapter 13 from verse 31, when Jesus had gone out, He said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.

If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself and glorify Him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you, you will seek me.

And just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, What I am going, you cannot come. And you commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another.

By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, What I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me after words.

[1 : 0 0] Peter said to him, Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I say to you, The cock will not crow till you have denied me three times.

So the one another, I guess you have picked up already. A new commandment I give to you, verse 34, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

So I mentioned that that's going to be our theme, it's going to be some of the one another's. And I hope that you didn't look at this and immediately think, okay, well, I know that.

Because that's an easy, I guess, reaction that we could have to it. But I think as we understand the gospel more and more, we recognize and remember it is the gospel that transforms us.

It changes us. It keeps on changing us, changes our heart so that we're more like Him. And it also changes the world in which we live and the people and the society around us as they come to know Jesus.

[2 : 0 7] And we're wanting that, aren't we? We're wanting our lives to be changed. Sometimes we're provoked by that and we feel that we wish we had changed more.

I was doing church planting assessment the last couple of days with six couples that are hoping to plant churches and some of the scenarios we're going through and the way we dealt with it.

And those of us who were assessing, many of us, some of us have been ministers for a long time and we were chatting about and thinking, man, I really wish I'd done more of that when I was that age or I wish I'd learned these things or I wish I'd grown more or I wish I would be able to change many things that I did when I started.

And so there's this constant sense in which we're being transformed and we're not to let that frustrate us. We're just to allow God to work through us in that. I would love this short series to kind of motivate us to chat about these things and also to act on them, maybe at your city groups informally or in your friendship groups in the church or when you pray or when you maybe think about inviting others to come along on a Sunday night and or watch it online even.

Just to begin to kick around some of these ideas and think about what does this mean for me as a person? What does it mean for us as a church under Christ?

[3 : 3 1] And I think that's a good thing as a community under Christ. Now I know that I'll probably annoy some of you, okay? So I'm sorry about that. I know you'd rather hear sermon on probably on the importance of doctrinal purity or even on church attendance or standing up on the public square or going out with your faith onto the streets or the free church distinctives maybe that we believe in.

Now all of these are really important. I'm not suggesting they're not important. But I want us to think about tonight a deeper and a more fundamental distinctive of us.

The importance of understanding what the love of God means. And what does Jesus mean when He says this? Because I think it's really important because it will determine what the world thinks of St. Columbus, the people maybe who come into St. Columbus or who know you as a member here. And it will also govern what people think of you as an individual Christian. So understanding really in our lives of this 13th commandment, because that's what we have, isn't it?

We've got the... Sorry, I've written down the 13th... I mean the 11th commandment. So there isn't another three, sorry. So I said 10 commandments, 12 disciples, yes.

[4 : 56] I knew there was a 12 somewhere. I said 10 commandments, yeah, there. Maybe we should do something on theology and doctrine. So the 11th commandment of course is what I meant to say here.

And it says it all for us, doesn't it? The 11th commandment says it all. Jesus says a new commandment I give to you. It's a new one. That you love one another just as I have loved you. And I would love you to meditate and to pray and maybe even to repent at some point. I certainly have as I've looked over this as we want to live it, because it's the foundation of everything else. Everything else we do, it's founded on understanding this new 11th commandment. So the question that I want to provoke in us over these four weeks with the various different one another's we look at is how's that been worked out here?

And so I want us to be really thinking about it here in our context and what we're doing, you know, how's it working out in my life? How's it working out in me as a Christian and how I work that out in the community that I belong to?

[6 : 12] So we're going to look at this commandment. The first thing that I want to say about it is that it's a new kind of love. We'll look at that in different ways. But one of the really important things about it is it's mutual, okay?

So it's a mutual love that's spoken about here. It says love one another, okay? Now if I was an English grammar scholar, which I'm not, I would say this is a reciprocal pronoun.

That means it's reciprocated. There must be... It's mutual. It's not just one way. And it's not that you're always giving out love all the time, nor is it always that you're taking love from other people all the time.

It's critical to understand that it's a reciprocal love. It's a getting, and it's a receiving, and a giving as we understand it.

And we'll come back to that a little bit more. So it's a new kind of love. It's a mutual love. It's also loving the way Jesus loved.

[7 : 17] That's what makes it different. It says, a new commandment, you'll love one another. Just as I have loved you, you're also to love one another, okay? So it's loving the way Jesus loved.

Now, I'm going to say two things about that. What does that mean? What does it mean to love the way Jesus loved us? Because we all love, don't we? We're all...

I mean, if you all say, well, I don't need a sermon on love, we all love. But this is loving a different way. And it's unique. And there's two things I want to say.

It's loving the way Jesus loved, but it's in a way that we can't do. So Jesus is asking us to do the impossible.

He's asking us to do something we can't. In John 15, in verse 12, He says, this is my commandment. Remember, that you love one another as I've loved you. It's repeated again, just in the same couple of chapters later.

[8 : 17] And then He goes on to say, greater love is no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. You're my friends if you do what I command. Do what I command. Now, in other words, He's saying, there's something unique here that you can't do in terms of this love.

He's speaking about laying down his life as He atoned for us on the cross. Now this is where the love of Christ is not mutual.

There's no mutuality here. The only way we can see and receive and live out this new commandment is if you will confess and if I will confess that we can't do it.

We can't do it. We can't love the way He wants us to love. We can't redeem our own lives. We can't make ourselves right with God by loving, just by loving.

We can't atone for our sins by just living a loving life. You know, you go out on a Saturday night and all these guys going about on mopeds with just eat bags on their back.

[9 : 25] So they're going everywhere and it's just eating. And sometimes we think it's like that with God. It's just love. That's all it is. As long as anyone loves, any old way, that's all that matters to God.

But that's not what He's saying. He's saying, you need to love the way I loved and I loved uniquely by laying down my life so that you could love.

In other words, it's until we can see that even our love naturally is a disordered love. It's not channeled in the right way.

Unless we can see the darkness and the guilt in our own hearts and the hell that we deserve in a real and personal way, I mean not in a kind of merely theological way, and put our trust in the Christ who loved us enough to call us His friends and to bear our judgment on the cross, which we sing about all the time.

It's until we recognize that and accept that that's the only time that we are beginning to understand the type of love that He gives us.

[10 : 42] It's His love that He gives us. He instills in our hearts when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, and He gives us His Spirit that enables us to begin to fulfill this new command.

If that makes sense, it's a bit paradoxical. But it enables us to love God first and to love one another the way He wants us to.

So doing business with God is always critical for us in our lives. Hugely important for us to recognize that it's not simply a natural love that is being spoken of here, but it's a love that has begun to be reordered because we recognize that God loves us so much, and because our sin is so great, we need Him.

So there's a humility in this love immediately. And one slightly, maybe not exactly focused application here, but in terms of recognizing that there's an impossibility to this love and that it's only Jesus that can love in this way and grant us this love, one application is it does deal with our Messiah complex.

There's only one Messiah. We can't save ourselves, let alone anyone else, and we can't be in that place of carrying the weight of the world and needing to be in control of either ourselves and others.

[12 : 19] We mustn't feel all the time that others need me, whether it's popularity or significance or dependence, or that my life must be worthy before God because there's only one Messiah, there's only one Savior.

So there's a way in which this commandment is given to us in a way we simply can't obey because only God can lay down His life in a way that enables us to be redeemed.

But, He also gives us this command in order for us to follow in a way that we can. And Jesus, in His humanity, when God became flesh, displayed what loving one another looks like.

He's very easy to mystify Jesus as some kind of superman who we can't imitate or follow. Now, He is our Savior, He is unique, but He's also someone that we can follow and imitate because He became a human being.

And He became a human being to show us what it looks like to fulfill at one level this new commandment that He's given. He became a person in every way just like you and me, except without sin.

[13 : 48] And He showed us what this mutual love looked like. Okay? So I'm coming back to this mutuality. He needed the love of others.

Okay? That's what I'm wanting to get across the mutuality of this love that He speaks about here. He became a human and became dependent on other people, and He needed their love.

He needed the love of His Father in heaven, so He made time for praying, and He made time for being in relationship with His Father. He needed that relationship. He needed His friends, His men and His women friends around Him.

We read these passages. Siobhan read these passages that spoke about the women that came around Jesus, and they looked after Him and supplied for His material needs, and they were there right at the cross as well as the ones who were friends of Jesus.

And He had these, and we've seen that and we understand that. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took not the twelve, He took three of His closest friends. And they'd say, you know, I need you to be with me at this time.

[14 : 55] Would you not stay awake? Please, I'm begging that you'll be with me here. He needed their support, their help, their encouragement, their practical care. They made food for Him.

They rented accommodation in the Airbnbs wherever He went, and they all went together wherever it was. He wanted their loyalty. He didn't travel alone. Jesus wasn't some kind of John the Baptist kind of guy who went out into the desert alone.

He was someone who needed the love of others around Him, and those around Him needed His love.

He's reciprocal. There's a mutuality in it. And He loved them by putting other people first. He loved them by, as it were, laying down His life before He laid down His life on the cross.

He was a servant king, so He met their needs. He treated them as individuals. He was interested in them. He saw and spoke to the people nobody else could see.

[15 : 55] They rejected and they confused. They alone, they blind, they misguided, they lost. He saw people as individual beings, spiritual beings, sheep without a shepherd.

He served them, He befriended them, He advised them. He spoke truth into their lives. He gave hope. He was committed to them. He healed them. So Christ became our example in a way that we can follow.

We can't be messiahs. We can't save anyone. We can't love in that way, but we can follow His example.

And so Christ, for us as Christians, for you as a Christian, if you take Christ as your Lord and Savior, He's your motivation and your power to obey this new command, isn't He?

Because Christ has done that, which you can't do for yourself. He is your Savior, and He's taken the reality of the lovelessness that's in your heart for Him.

[16 : 59] And I wonder if the understanding of hell is that it's a place of no love, or is it a place where there's no love of God, or is it a place of disordered love in the extreme?

It's certainly not a place where there is God's love revealed in our hearts. He's taken that, and He's laid down His life, and we have His grace.

And there's an old Scottish founder of the free church called Thomas Chalmers who wrote a book called The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

And he just says that when you know that love is God as your Savior, you can't keep it in. Now, I'm going to be very irreverent here, and I'm not meaning to be irreverent, but I think it's just a good illustration.

It's like your heart is a bottle of Coke, and the Holy Spirit comes in, it's like a packet of Mentos. And you know what happens when you put Coke in Mentos, it just explodes out.

[18 : 10] And that is the reality of understanding the motivation for living that love. It's the expulsive power of a new affection.

That's an old-fashioned way of just saying, it's the great power of His love in our hearts, coming out powerfully. So Christ is our Savior, and Christ we know is our friend, and He loves us, and we've experienced not just in salvation, but we already know He's put our needs before His own, if I can speak reverently again, before His own eternal comfort, as it were.

We've accepted. We belong to Him. He lives in us. He's committed to our ongoing salvation. He's promised that He will meet your needs in mind, and that He will not leave us, and that He is healed and is healing us, even when we don't understand, even in the darkness of life that we experience. And we have that glorious future that was mentioned this morning beyond our wildest dreams, in the battle and in the difficulties. He says to trust Him in that.

So He's both our Savior and our friend, and therefore He becomes our example. And He says, I give you this commandment that you will love one another just as I have loved you.

[19 : 41] So what is it that we do? We lay down our lives for Christ.

We die to ourselves. And that reveals itself by not denying Him. Isn't it interesting just at the end of that passage? You read on to the end of that passage because Peter says, you know, Jesus says, look, there's something you can't do, Peter.

There's some place you can't come. And He's basically talking about the cross, isn't He? And it's that uniqueness of the atonement. And Peter says, oh, yeah, I'm going to come.

He says, I will follow you. I will lay down my life for you. Peter says, I'll lay down my life for you. He says, He's got that kind of love. And hours later, He's denied that He even knows Jesus.

And Jesus knows that. He says, look, Peter, you're going to deny me three times. You don't have, you don't understand that love, that dying to self.

[20 : 47] Peter was wanting to do it in his own strength. He was wanting to be a Messiah. He was wanting to be alongside Him in many ways. And so this love that is in our hearts is to be a denying of ourselves and a not denying Jesus, a not disowning Him.

It's a disowning of our own sinful interests and desires. And at the same time, it's also mutual. This love that He speaks about, it's love that is mentioned here, it was mutual for Jesus.

It's mutual in the command, love one another, you know, it's this pronoun that's got reciprocal pronoun. And that is the same for us. If we are to fulfill this command in the strength of Jesus, it's reciprocal.

It means for you and it means for me. One that you need the love of other people. You need to be loved.

It's not always about giving, you know, we look at love one another and you really love people. But it's also saying you need the love of others. It's being humble enough to be dependent on others and to receive that love.

[22 : 04] It's dealing with the pride that's in our hearts that's saying, I don't need anyone. I can do this on my own. I can live this life. I can be a Christian on my own.

He's saying, no, it's a reciprocal love. He's saying, I'm spiritually competent and all and it's me and God. And he says, no.

He's saying to love like Jesus loved us is to be able to say, like I need you. I need your help. I need your friendship.

I need someone to listen to me. I need you not to be my judge. I'm vulnerable and I'm struggling. I need, I need, even sometimes it says, I need you to understand that I need to rest and I need to be alone with my God, but only for a time.

So there's that sense in which each of us in St. Columbus and their core communities, whether it's city groups are here on a Sunday or however we, however we understand our involvement in the church, it's saying that we need one another, that we are not islands.

[23 : 19] That is part of the love of Christ in us that we recognize. We are part of a people, part of a family, part of a vulnerable Christ-centered, Christ-imitating group.

Like Jesus who needed a... He was the Son of God. Surely if anyone didn't need people, it was Jesus and yet He made Himself dependent because He wanted to give us an example and because in His humanity, that was a real need.

So He needed the love of others and remember He loved perfectly. To love perfectly doesn't mean you don't need people and don't need others, but also it's a recognition that others need your love in the Christian community.

Others need your love. You know, it's the one debt that remains, John read that in Romans 13, it's the one debt that remains in our lives as Christians to love one another.

It's a debt that we keep on paying for the rest of our lives and that we seek to lay down our self-centered understanding of love in order to love others and be loved.

[24 : 41] So we don't really have the freedom as Christians if we seek to be like Jesus and want to be like Jesus and obey this commandment just to say, I don't care.

They don't deserve it. They've just let me down once too often. I can't forgive again. I'm too busy.

I have too many problems of my own. I love them, but only if they love me back the same way.

They're not my type. I need other kind of friends that understand me. They're maybe too needy. But we are called to love like Jesus, sharing our lives and our hearts, our forgiveness, probably more than anything, our patience.

You know, the fruit of the Spirit we know it. You know, talk about the tree, Jeremiah tree, where our roots are, what the fruit is, what is it, thorns and thistles, or is it the fruit of the Spirit that we display when the storms and the drought and the difficulties and hardships come?

[25 : 59] Our homes, we seek to share in hospitality, our wages, the small things, a cup of cold water. That's what Jesus says, doesn't he, on the day of judgment?

He doesn't say the big things. He doesn't say it's massive wad out of your wage packet. He says, that cup of cold water that you gave to someone in my name, that was just like doing it for me.

Can you see that that, I've been challenged that that is not a typical love, is it? It's not an unusual love. It's counterintuitive love.

It's not saying I'll love because you've loved me and because it's a warm, lovely environment and everyone loves one another.

It's Christ's love. It's unique. There's nothing like it. And we can't appreciate until we've knelt down at the cross and seen that He laid down His life in order to enable us to love like that.

[27 : 08] So what the church there for, the local church, I think, is God's test lab. It's where He works out. He wants us to work out our understanding of our salvation and His love for us.

And it's a lifelong test lab. We're always going to be developing and maturing and improving our understanding of His love. It's a committed test lab, the church.

There's always time involved in getting to know people and persevering with them and being patient and all of that. Since He's His test lab for His love being worked out.

We're His guinea pigs. That's a terrible illustration. Sorry. But that's true, isn't it? It's His test lab.

And as Christians, He wants us to work out His love in this community.

Love one another, He says, as I've loved you. I would love you to go home and look at that verse again and again and again in depth and say, what does that mean for my life and for my understanding?

[28 : 25] The last thing I want to say just briefly is there's a big surprise in this. A great big surprise. It's the best way of making Jesus famous.

It's the absolute best way of making Jesus famous. Just as I've loved you, so you love one another. By this, one or two people, the odd person that drifts in now and again, no, all people will know that you're my disciples if you love one another.

That's the great surprise is that we fret all the time. I fret all the time about evangelism, about how are we going to reach the lost?

How are we going to see people converted in St. Columbus and because of and through the community of St. Columbus and reaching out with the gospel? Always thinking about evangelism and how best to do that.

And yet understanding this command towards each other has to be the key to reaching the lost and understanding the true nature and the basic characteristic of the church.

[29 : 34] It's not just a meeting. It can't be. Just simply, it has to be something more than that. It's not a new church service I give to you.

It's a new commandment that you go to another Bible study. It's not actually that vital though these things are because they reveal what the love is, but it is as we put into practice what we know about the living God and Jesus Christ together in the grit and gut of the day to day living of Christianity, that God will convert people around us.

And so I wrestle with the question, how can we do that? Because people aren't being converted around us in St. Columbus.

It's a long time. Since we've seen many people come into Jesus Christ, we grow, people come, people leave. We're privileged to have new people come in who move to the city and they're all great things, brilliant things.

But what are we needing to change something that will enable everyone to see that we are Christ's disciples by the way we love one another?

[30 : 57] I think it's the most radical evangelistic message particularly for this generation, which is isolated, quite angry, separated, judgmental, lonely.

I think that's a great evangelistic message. The love of Christ lived out is the good news. And Romans 13 again, it spills over to our neighbor.

We'll not be able to contain the generosity of the love we have for each other. It's not an insular thing. Just can't contain it. It bubbles over. It's meant to be visible and it's meant to be seen.

And if you're not a Christian this evening, and I don't say this just as an afterthought at the end of the sermon, because I hope that everything above has been a challenge, everything that we've looked at in the last 20 minutes has been a challenge.

But do you know that love? We all have natural love in our hearts, but this is a different love.

[32 : 08] It's reordering the love in our heart, and it's putting God first in His rightful place. And then with that motivation loving one another, huge challenge for us.

But brilliant, isn't it? Because God is with us in that, and He's patient, and He's long-suffering, and we're here. We're here. We're here to pray.

Father God, help us to see the value and the importance of these amazing one another's in Scripture. And we overlook them, or we maybe take them for granted.

They're so full of rich truth for us. And help us not to be frustrated or judgmental or looking at our own weakness and inabilities. And we just rest in You and just rejoice that this is such a brilliant way to live.

This is an amazing way because we were created to live this way. You've created us this way to love You and to love one another. And it's such a challenge. It reminds us of the depth so much of the sin that a selfishness that reacts against that and wants us to just love myself, love me.

[33 : 21] Lord forgive me for not exemplifying that better. It's a leader, and in the church here over many years, always that regret that each of us have in our lives, but may not paralyze us.

You give us wisdom in the right time in the right way, and may it be that we find more and more the ability to renew, to review our lives and to renew them in Christ and to learn of Your love more and more.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.