

## Love One Another

John 13:34-35

We are traveling through the New Testament on a journey to discover what Scripture has to say about our treatment of one another. The topic for today is of most importance and the root of all the other one another passages. Without this characteristic all our efforts would be mechanical, even impossible and implausible. It is as broad and deep as the universe and seemingly as evasive as the wind, yet we only need to look around and its effects are quite evident.

Without it we become distant, hollow, selfish.

Without it we are like the book titled *Pride and Prejudice*.

Without it we become like a barren, cold wasteland.

It is a characteristic that is to permeate and prevail, yet without it the church will become cold as steel.

A church sign read “A cold church is like cold butter – it doesn’t spread well.”

So we come today to our second one another passage. By way of quick review last week we discussed that we are members of one another. Each member belongs to the body of Christ and therefore supports each other functioning as God purposed for us to operate in the body for the benefit of the others in the body. We all have a role to perform in the body and the question is – are we?

The one another topic we are looking at today is to love one another. Turn then to John 13:34-35. This is a very broad topic that we could spend a month of Sundays discussing and still not uncover all there is about this important trait that is to radiate from us. It is the driving factor of how we treat one another.

A pastor was called to a fairly large church some years ago. During his first week of responsibilities in the new church he diligently studied for his first message the following Sunday. He was all prepared as he walked into the sanctuary to deliver his message when he heard the Lord speak to him. The

Lord had another message he was to deliver. He argued with the Lord that he had a wonderful message already prepared. The Lord continued to urge him to change the message. The pastor got up to speak and told the congregation that he had prepared all week for the message, but on the way in to preach that message the Lord had given him a new message. It was simply this: “Love one another”. He turned and sat down. After a few minutes he got up and repeated the message and sat down again. The song leader leaned over and asked if he was supposed to get up and sing a hymn. The pastor got up again and repeated the message. More silence. The Lord began to work in hearts. Several people got up and left. More followed. The next week the pastor repeated the message. God began to work in that church. After several weeks of preaching the same message some began to criticize the pastor and left the church, but he kept preaching that message. Broken relationships within the church were being restored. Fractured and splintered families were once again experiencing the joy of reconciliation through taking to heart the simple message of loving one another. The church grew as a result.

After several more weeks the pastor announced that the Lord had given him a new message to preach. There was loud cheering. Here was his message – “Love your neighbor”. The auditorium emptied as people understood the intent of the message.

Now, I’m intending to preach my message once, I think, unless the Lord leads otherwise and it’s already been more than three words. Yet I pray the impact is just as powerful. But that is the heart of the message – love one another. What does the Bible say about this topic?

The way of love

The work of love

The witness of love

I. THE WAY OF LOVE – v. 34a

## A. Loving One Another Is A Command

Let's do a quick quiz.

What is the Great Commission? Matthew 28:19-20  
 "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

What is the Great Commitment? Luke 9:23 "And He said to them all, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'"

What is the Great Commandment? Mark 12:30-31  
 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

We could add our text today to that of the greatest commandment to love one another and as I said last week these are commands to obey and not suggestions to consider.

A command is a direct order coming from someone with authority and here the order is given by Jesus to love one another. Notice that He begins by stating that this is a "new command". There are two words in the Greek language which mean new. Neos is a word that means something that was not before but now is, something new in time. Jesus uses it the lesson about not putting new wine in an old wineskin. In Genesis 1 we have something new that was not before. We have the 6 days of creation.

Think about the very first horseless carriage or the first time the Wright brothers took flight.

It could be a new house where one never existed.

The second word used in Greek for new is kainos. It's a word that means new in quality or kind,

something different from the old. Commercials advertise something new and improved. It's not something that is new in terms of never before being on the market, but it is new in quality. It's the word used for the new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:1.

Paul uses that word to describe that in Christ we are a new creation. We're new in quality because of Christ in us. That's the word Jesus uses here to speak of the command we have been given. The command is given in Leviticus 19:18 to love our neighbor. So this is not a new command in time, but a new command in quality. It was new in experience.

Warren Wiersbe explains it this way: "love would take on a new meaning and power because of the death of Christ." The coming of the Holy Spirit would give them new power to love others.

Paul tells us that this love is only divinely produced through the indwelling Spirit. I can't will it into my life or practice it in my own strength. It's only through yielding to the Holy Spirit's work that I can love others in this way, a different way than before.

Let me say this before we go any further because this love is differentiated between the love we have for others in a friendly relationship. This command to love others is divine, it comes from God, the God of whom it is said "is love." Every act of His nature is motivated by His great love.

His mercy comes from His love.

His grace comes from His love.

His forgiveness comes from His love.

His compassion comes from His love.

His justice comes from His love.

His benevolence comes from His love.

Love is the underlying motivation by which He acts in every way toward us.

It's important to remember that His love is eternal. He has said "I have loved you with an everlasting

love.” (Jeremiah 31:3) That means it is eternal and unchanging.

Because He is God His love is unlimited.

Because He is God His love is unfathomable.

Because He is God His love is unconditional.

Because He is God His love is unsolicited.

His love has no limit. He loves us the same from eternity past and into eternity future with a love that not only endures, but also never changes.

His love can't be comprehended. Romans 5:8 says He demonstrated His love toward us in that while we still sinners, enemies He sent His Son. We can't understand the depth of that kind of love that would treat an enemy that way.

His love has no conditions. There isn't anything I do that will change His mind about me. When we read in John 3:16 that God loved the world, there is not a foot note or exclusion clause that says except person or that country.

We don't ask for His love but He gives it to us anyway. Scripture tells us that He first loved us. Loving one another then, is a command. Loving one another is also a commitment.

## B. Loving One Another Is A Commitment

Now we read again in our text “A new command I give unto you, that you love one another...”

I suppose it goes without saying that when we love someone, we will do all we can to please that person and because we love that person, what they ask is not tedious. There's a great reminder in the Old Testament of this. It's the love story between Jacob and Rachel. He had journeyed to the land of his mother and settled in with her family where he met and fell in love with Rachel. Genesis 29:20 “And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her.”

When we love others as Christ has loved us, then His command is not burdensome. It's a commitment we make to love others in the same way. And because everything that the Lord asks us to do stems from His holiness, we know that anything we are commanded to do is good. We can conclude that such a commitment to love others in this way can only be explained as divine empowerment – the work of God's Spirit in us. Otherwise as someone has so aptly stated:

To dwell above with saints we love,  
That will indeed be glory.  
But to dwell below with saints we know,  
Well, that's another story.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states that if we are to do justice to this kind of love, we must love with all our heart, soul, and strength. Love is a command. It's the order of the day. It's also a commitment. It is to be done regardless of how we feel or how we are treated.

Now, I want to add this one thought before we move on to the work of love. The thought is this: the command to love one another given here by Jesus is meant to be between believers, between those who follow Jesus. Now that doesn't get us off the hook in having to show love to anyone who isn't a disciple of Christ. We are to show love to them as well. The command here is to love the believer. Love the person in the body who is abrasive. Love the person in the body who is uncaring. Love the person in the body who is unforgiving. Love the person in the body who gossips about us, who treats us unkindly, who says something derogatory or something malicious.

When we take this command seriously and love each other in the body of Christ it becomes a powerful witness to a watching world that Christ's love is at work in us. The excuse that they don't want to become a Christian because of all the hypocrites in the church flies out the window when

they see our genuine love for each other. This is a command to love everyone in the body of Christ. We don't need to look very far to see that the world is a more hostile place to live, especially for Christians. It is therefore all the more important that we get along with each other, that we love one another. It's becoming all too clear that not many out there in the world have much love for us. Loving one another must be a commitment, that's the way of love.

Verse 34 then speaks about the work of love.

## II. THE WORK OF LOVE – v. 34b

### A. Our Model for Love

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another as I have loved you.”

Stop for a moment and wrap your noodle around that. We shouldn't have to go very far to think about how Christ has loved us. But just in case you're struggling with the how, let me remind you to just go back to the cross, go back to His crucifixion and the suffering He endured, taking our place, dying the death we deserve to give us the life we don't deserve.

There's a great reminder in the simple children's hymn. Sing it with me.

Jesus loves me this I know,

For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong;

They are weak, but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

The Bible tells me so.

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O how He loves you and me!

O how He loves you and me!

He gave His life; what more could He give?

O how He loves you;

O how He loves me;

O how He loves you and me!

Jesus to Calv'ry did go;

His love for sinners to show.

What He did there brought hope from despair.

O how He loves you;

O how He loves me;

O how He loves you and me!

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Romans 5:5-8

Christ is our model of how we are to love one another and we need look no further than His going to the cross. That is the degree or depth to which we are to love. Our love for one another should be sacrificial, not that we necessarily die in someone's place, but that we love sacrificially. His love for us is the standard by which we are to love one another.

Now let's also understand that in the Greek this command to love one another is a present active subjunctive meaning we are to keep on loving, right now, at this moment and every moment, every day.

I am to love others *because* Christ loved me.

I am to love others *how* Christ loved me.

He is our model.

So what then is the practical way in which we are to love one another? Consider our manifestation of love.

### B. Our Manifestation of Love – v. 34

This is where the rubber meets the road. The practical ways love is to be demonstrated.

Galatians 5:13 – love serves others

Ephesians 4:2 – love tolerates others

Romans 12:10 – love is devoted to others

I Peter 5:14 – love greets others

Romans 12:9a – love is genuine to others

Romans 12:9b – love hates evil

Romans 12:10 – love honors others

Romans 12:13 – love is hospitable to others

Romans 12:15 – love empathizes with others

Romans 12:16a – love is united with others

Romans 12:16b – love is humble toward others

Perhaps the quintessential manifestation of love is found in Paul's letter to Corinth. If there ever was a description of what love should look like it is in this passage.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

In a world that is microwave fast with instant pudding, instant coffee, instant oatmeal, and express lanes our society is increasingly impatient.

We hate being put on hold.

We hate waiting in the doctor's office.

We hate sitting behind someone daydreaming at the stop light.

You know that the time between when the light turns green and when the person behind you honks their horn is known as the honk o-meter.

Why can't others value our time?

Here is love manifested.

Love is patient.

It doesn't get irritated when someone else is running behind schedule and will make us late. It doesn't huff or puff or sigh deeply or roll the eyes.

It doesn't get irritated when something isn't done the way we would have done it.

It doesn't get irritated when someone doesn't catch on to something as fast as we think they should when we are trying to show them something.

It doesn't get irritated when someone forgets.

Love is patient.

Love is kind.

It is friendly, gentle, tender, sympathetic.

It sees the plight of someone else and offers to help in some way.

It notices the emotional pain of another and offers an encouraging word or an arm around the shoulder.

It is generous when a need comes up that the other cannot meet.

It sees a need and digs in to help.

Kindness can be little things like getting the neighbors mail or driving them to a doctor's appointment or just visiting someone who may be lonely. It's putting their needs before our own.

Love is not envious. It does not look at what others have and become jealous or discontented.

It isn't envious when someone drives in with a new automobile.

It isn't envious when someone gets the promotion we wanted.

It isn't envious when someone gets better grades or is a better athlete or musician.

On the flip side to that love does not boast and is not proud.

It doesn't brag about high grades or the MVP or the bonus.

It doesn't brag about being a better cook or about having the best lawn or being first on the block to own the new gadget or catching the biggest fish.

Love doesn't bring attention to itself but puts others forward and first.

Instead of bragging, love is humble.

Going along with patience is the idea that love is not rude.

They seem to go hand in hand.

Rudeness breeds anger, develops bitterness, is easily irritated, and lashes out at someone, anyone – usually the person that caused them to be irritated.

They are discourteous and harsh.

They cut us off in traffic or ride our bumper if we seem to be going slower than they want.

We have seen them in line at the airport when a flight has been cancelled or delayed.

We hear them rant at the customer service desk when they are returning an item because it broke.

They push their way to the front of the line thinking

they have a right to cut in ahead of everyone else who has been waiting their turn.

Love is not rude.

Love is not self-seeking.

According to the dictionary, this person seeks only or mainly to further his or her own interests. They are self-serving and don't care how many toes they step on or how many backs they crawl over to get that promotion or notoriety. And it can happen in the church. They want the spotlight and recognition.

My theology teacher told of a church raising money for a building project. A well to do person in the congregation was willing to make a sizeable donation if the pastor would recognize him in the service.

Love is not easily angered.

Think for a moment about the last time you were angry and consider the circumstances around it. How did it make you feel? How did it make others around you feel?

And close on its heels – love keeps no record of wrongs. We might even say that love should erase the list by the end of the day. It implies that restitution, reconciliation, and forgiveness have occurred.

Someone aptly stated that “faults are thick when love is thin.” Love keeps no records of wrong.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices when truth prevails.

Love seeks to protect others.

Love trusts others.

Love always hopes.

Love always perseveres.

Love never fails.

Here's how *the Message* puts it:

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me

first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. Love never dies.

That's a tall order, but it's the kind of love we are to have toward others in the body of Christ if we are to love one another as Christ loved us.

Someone might say so what? Why should we manifest this kind of love to others? Let's close looking at verse 35. It answers the question of why. It shows us what can happen when we demonstrate love. This verse shows us the witness of love.

### III. THE WITNESS OF LOVE – v. 35

“By this” introduces the reason for the manifestation of such divine love for others. First of all there is an inward motivation.

#### A. An Inward Motivation

Because Christ loves us and because we say we love Christ, then we are to love others in the same way.

I John 4:7-12, 19-21

I am to love others because God's love is at work in me and through me. It's easy to love someone who looks like me, smells like me, or acts like me so when someone else comes into my circle who is a Christian who is different, I am to treat them no differently. Otherwise, how can the love of God be in me? John goes so far as to infer that if I don't love another brother or sister in Christ with love it can be a strong argument against whether I am truly born again.

I John 3:14-18 “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. We know that

we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be that person?"

What is in my heart will come out in my actions. Loving others is an outward manifestation of an inward motivation that witnesses to the world.

## B. An Outward Manifestation

Others will know we are genuine followers of Christ when we demonstrate this kind of sacrificial love toward each other in the body. Why would they want to be part of a group that beats up and devours one another?

J. Vernon McGee tells about going to live with two aunts and an uncle. One aunt attended the Baptist Church and the other attended the Presbyterian Church. The uncle was not a Christian. Every Sunday after services at the dinner table, they would gossip and complain about the pastor or someone else in the church. As time went on, the uncle became ill and was in the hospital. Distraught, one of the aunts asked him why the uncle wouldn't get saved. He wanted to but didn't tell her the truth that we won't win the lost by being Christian cannibals.

One of the early church fathers, Tertullian, wrote about an incident that occurred during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The Roman government became increasingly disturbed about the early church because so many people were getting saved. Spies were sent into the church gatherings to see what was going on and returned with this report as recorded by Tertullian: "These Christians are very strange people. They meet together in an empty

room to worship. They do not have an image. They speak of One by the name of Jesus, who is absent, but whom they seem to be expecting at any time. And my, how they love Him and how they love one another."

Someone not from this church was attending an event we had here and made the comment to one of our congregation who relayed the message to me. This person was very impressed with our church folks noting that they could tell we really care about one another. I hope that's true outside the church, that we're not just showing love outwardly during services, but act differently outside these walls.

Jesus says our love for one another is a witness to the world. That kind of love shows an unsaved person that we are disciples of Jesus. The inward motivation is outwardly made known. I think the world is looking for something like that, something that is genuine. They see enough phoniness and John says when they see real love for one another they are seeing the love of God.

Here's a frightening thought posed by Frances Schaeffer "The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture...In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians."

How are we doing? Is Christ's love obvious in our church in how we love others in the body of Christ?

The conclusion of the matter is "love one another". Is there someone in the body of Christ you need to go to today and seek forgiveness because you haven't demonstrated Christ's love to them?

May others say of us "see how they love one another", this is how they know we are His disciples.