

Intro - Open to John 15:12-17

Jesus's teaching on the night he is betrayed stretches for five chapters, 13-17. So right in the middle here, chapter 15, Judas has left to prepare his betrayal, Jesus and the faithful disciples have left the upper room and are being taught as they walk to the Garden of Gethsemane for Jesus' agonizing prayer and the disciples nap. Now last week we looked at Jesus' parable of the vine. *"I Am the true Vine and my father is the vinedresser... and you are the branches"*. Jesus, not Israel, is now the true vine into which all God's people must abide. And the implications start with fruitful obedience, but the application continues in our text today.

Jesus commands love among his disciples and helps us obey the commandment. We WILL love one another. Love for the other disciples, for God's people, is the surest external sign of your abiding in Christ, your love for one another will be applied in your **love of sacrifice, love of friendship, and love of evangelism.**

Or we will sum it up another way:

Those saved by Christ show His love in His way.

One – Love of Sacrifice

Read John 15:12-13

¹²“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus' commandment most recently points back to verse 10, where if we obey Christ and his commandments we will abide in his love, we will enjoy and experience his love. But this points back farther to earlier in the night during the supper when he says in 13:34, “a new commandment I give to you, love one another”. The repetition helps us see that the obedience to Christ and love for his disciples, or today his church, go together.

But our love for each other isn't without precedence, it is love with an example. **Just as I have loved you.**

Jesus most perfectly loves us:

¹³Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus' love was sacrificial in nature. During his ministry he would give of his time and energy to those who would never return his love. The story in Luke 17 of the 10 lepers sticks out. Jesus heals all 10 but only 1 returns to thank him and profess faith. In John 6, Jesus feeds 5000 people and by the next meal they are just asking for more. He teaches them that he is the bread of life, and they must abandon, sacrifice, all other sources of life in order to receive him. It says in verse 66 that many of his disciples turned away because he was offering eternal life when they wanted to fill their bellies.

Ultimately Jesus is preparing his disciples in this passage that he will lay down his life for them, his friends. This is the essence of biblical, divine love: **sacrificial love.**

We know too well that our love for others, our spouse, our siblings and strangers is shaped by the love we have received. The breakdown of the family in our culture with the absence of fathers and the lack of loving care from parents in general can be tied directly to the mess our world is in.

*Research supports the idea that warmth and affection expressed by parents to their children results in life-long positive outcomes for those children, according to **Child Trends**, the leading nonprofit research organization in the United States focused on improving the lives and prospects of children, youth, and their families.*

Higher self-esteem (which I will say is too highly esteemed), improved academic performance, better parent-child communication, and fewer psychological and behavior problems are linked to parental affection.

In a spiritual sense, I know that the love I show Jude and Grace will be in large part how they perceive God's love but it's also how they will be motivated and encouraged to love others. That love we give them, should be sacrificial in nature. Lexi and I must give up sleep, any free time, sanity and even my Dr. Pepper must be sacrificed when Jude is asking incessantly for “soda, please”. **He does say please though.**

As we live this life connected to Christ, abiding in him, we will receive the sacrifice of his life for ours, so we in turn will love one another sacrificially.

This will extend outside of the church, we will get there soon, but Jesus starts with the closest of relationships, with his friends.

John, the author, would reflect on this type of love in his letter we call First John. The whole letter is about love but chapter 3 is about the love for one another and how as brothers and sisters in Christ we will love sacrificially. Read it this week, it will bless you.

Expect to be conformed to the image of Christ, and desire to sacrifice for one another. Your time, your energy, your finances, and maybe even your lives. Just because it doesn't cost us our physical lives yet in America to follow Christ, it may soon be expected. So we live today, digging deeper into love for each other, that if it is required, we are ready to give. On the day of persecution, which we will discuss next week, I hope God is preparing the men and women of this church to boldly stand and sacrifice for one another and for the faith. **His sacrificial love is his way.** His sacrificial love is also for his friends.

Two – Love of Friendship

Read John 15:14-15

¹⁴You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Verse 13 says that Jesus dies for his friends so he now answers, who his friends are! So first I want you to recognize, that friendship with Christ, “friends of Christ” has a definition. It is not open ended. Not every person is a friend of God. In the Bible only a few were named friends of God; Abraham, Moses and during Jesus's lifetime there was Lazarus. So now the disciples are being included as his friends, but notice that it is not that Christ is their friend, we, his disciples are HIS friends. This is an important distinction because it properly puts our relationship with God in perspective.

In my childhood, and it lingers into adulthood, one of my biggest struggles was friendship. I was in counseling in elementary school to work through my insecurities and troubles with making friends. In high school, my senior year, I felt abandoned and alone by all the friends I thought I had. But something remarkable happened in that spring when I sat outside of the school, crying as an 18-year-old. God impressed to me that he was all I needed. I was his friend, and that relationship which he brought me into was enough to help me endure.

As I reflected upon it this week, it may have been my friendship with God that strengthened my faith. I relied on him through a lonely freshman year of college and ultimately into a contentment with the relationships he has given me on earth and with his ultimate care and concern. I am his friend.

Friends of God are contrasted in verse 15 with slaves of God. Jesus' distinction between the two is our knowledge of his will. Jesus had specifically been teaching and preparing and foretelling what was to come. He prepared them for his death, he prepared them for their persecution, and he prepared them for their ministry. **He prepared them for to love in his way.**

Consider this: All that you need to know about God has been revealed. Hebrews 1:1 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.* Jesus, the word made flesh, fulfills the law and revealed through the apostles, these disciples he is speaking to in this text, all they would need to record of his life. It's recorded in their eyewitness testimony of the Gospels, in their preaching in the book of Acts, in their letters and prophecy. It's all we need.

Do you want to know if you are a friend of God? Ask yourself, do you love the people of God and do you know what has been revealed? We don't read our Bible for some kind of trivia knowledge of the stories it contains. No, we read and invest in our friendship with God, so we will know him and all he has and will do. If you feel your love for God's people is lacking, reinvest in the church and pray for your love for them and your ability to obey Christ's command to increase. If you feel you do not know your Bible, read it and find a Christian who is mature to help you. **His love of his friends is his way.**

As we grow in love for one another and knowledge of God, the natural result is we will want to share and bring more into God's love and our love. That's evangelism.

Three – Love of Evangelism

Read John 15:16-17

¹⁶You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷This I command you, that you love one another.

Now fruit in last week's text, was broader in its application. It is all of the spiritual gifts and obedience we will produce when connected to Christ. Within that is the narrow application Jesus reveals here.

As he chooses the disciples (now elevated to friends), he is practicing the reverse of that day's norm with rabbi's and disciples. In the first century, Jewish teachers (called rabbis) would develop a following and prospective disciples would pick their rabbi. But Jesus is not one to allow us our pride for being so wise as to choose him. He chooses us. Now this is pointed to the disciples but it plays out in the fullness of Scripture that God's choosing extends to all believers. That nothing about the Christian was worthy of being selected by Christ, but yet here we are. Ephesians 1:4, "He **CHOSE US**, in Him, before the foundation of the world". Let this knock down your pride Christian. Let this humble the mighty that if it were not for God, you would not exist or breathe, and if it were not for his gracious, unmerited choosing, you would not love or serve God.

Now, notice that as he chose the disciples, he appointed them to GO. Now the evidence that the apostles, truly did GO, is truly remarkable. A handful of scared and untrained men are commissioned again after Christ's resurrection into a great commission (Matthew 28:19) to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Matthew would go to Ethiopia in Africa and die by the sword. John would be boiled in oil in Rome, exiled to Patmos and then died in Turkey. Bartholomew or Nathanael was martyred in Armenia in Asia. Andrew was crucified in Greece. Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India. Paul, the abnormally born apostle, was beheaded in Rome on his way to Spain. And their fruit remained.

This fruit of new converts, true converts, will remain. One of the marks of a true faith that we neglect is perseverance. We are quick to affirm the perseverance of the saints, as a doctrine that once you are saved, you are always saved. The question is, how do you view that doctrine in your own perseverance? Your salvation will prove its nature by the status of your faith at the end of your life.

I do not wish any of you to think that a profession of faith as a child or as an adult, is the act that saves you. If you pray one prayer but then you reject God, curse God, and rebelliously live your life contrary to God's command, your disobedience may end up proving the condition of your soul.

It is God who saves and gives you a new heart. Out of this new heart you profess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Your profession is the moment you realize what God has done to rescue you in Christ. What else can you do than declare that you repent of your sins and believe in Jesus who has saved you. This is why Jesus **commands us**, to sacrificial love for one another, as friends of God, and to declare the truth to sinners in evangelism. **His love must be shared in His way.**

Conclusion

Now in this body of believers I want to challenge you this morning to two sacrificial types of love.

First, I want you to consider how you are engaged in the life of this church. Sunday School, Food Truck Ministry, Deacon Ministry, Prayer. I want you to consider, how is it sacrificial? How is your participation in our church sacrificial? Are you sacrificial with your time? Do you love another church member who is difficult to love? **Sometimes that difficult person is you! So love another difficult person while you are at it! So love another difficult person while you are at it!** Do you give above your tithes and offerings to our missionaries in India or Haiti? Would you consider the "spiritual gift of showing up?" This is loving God's church and people by showing up in the lives of others. Dropping by someone's house, showing up at weddings and funerals, going to birthdays, etc. It's not about a particular practice, but its intentionally and sacrificially being present in the lives of the believers. That might be coming to Sunday School, Sunday night or Wednesday night because your prayers and your presence are critical to the spiritual growth of another. However you do it, your engagement with the local church, to love one another, must be sacrificial. Don't miss that!

Second, consider your practice of evangelism. Are you active in sharing your faith? Now hear me, I did not say, effective. That is not your job, the fruit is of God. The fruit, if real, will remain. But to be a disciple of Jesus, to be truly loving like Christ will be to dare to interrupt the lives of those walking the broad road to hell, put a rock in their shoe, the rock of offense which is Christ and then pray, because it is always within the will of God for sinners to be saved by grace through faith! Where will you share? How will you share? Romans Road? Tracts? Romans 6:23?

In all this, remember: **Those saved by Christ show His love in His way.**