

Christ's Love for us Commands our Love Toward Each Other

John 15:12-17

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Introduction:

Well...here we are...March of 2020 seems so far away right now doesn't it?

But yet...we are all still right in the middle of it all...words like Pandemic and pivot are still seared into our minds...masks, lockdowns, community spread and physical distancing are still present realities...**Add to this...our current stresses...Vaccines and to get them or not to still wear a mask or not, to get the booster or not...who do we trust, God, government, culture and how should we act...**

Now...as we come together in Canada on this Saturday\Sunday of the month...**to Worship God, to celebrate the gospel, to live out our faith...we do so in a COVID world...with an election just behind us, and now with Vaccine passports in the news, 4th waves, vaccines for kids 5-11...and all the unknowns for kids and parents that brings...things like...is the vaccine truly safe for those 12 and up...all the what abouts, how comes and what now's are everywhere in our lives...**

Here we are...a Church gathering, trying to give each other grace, trying to example being good citizens, trying to obey God above all else...trying to protect the weak and the vulnerable, while still being a safe place for any and all people...we are surrounded by uncertainty, mistrust, defensiveness and fear...not to mention...we face our own struggles and hear about the struggles of those ALL around the world...

Social media is a toxic cesspool of hate, conspiracy theories and labeling anyone who doesn't hold to your point of view...and the results of this???

Hurting people...hurting people...marriage is hard, family is stressful...going to a movie can become a fight about space or masks...going to a restaurant has been turned in to a right of the vaccinated verses the unvaccinated...

But what about Church??? What about Christians?

Has or IS Church a safe place?

Where hurting, searching, confused people can come together to find...LOVE, GRACE, MERCY, Patience...longsuffering and gentleness...**is Church a place for broken people to be honest and vulnerable...where sinners can sing of a great saviour who has declared them to be SAINTS?**

How! How are we...going to navigate the crazy times of our lives and the world we live in...be true to God's Word all the while OBEYING God's Word and actually being CHRISTIAN while we do it???

Well...I'm glad you asked ☺

The Answer of course is **LOOK TO JESUS!**

That is what the Gospel of John really is...it's a...**LOOK AT JESUS biopic...**John is inspired to show us Jesus...as **HE relates to PEOPLE...**He chooses to do this by carefully choosing 7 amazing signs mixed with 7 amazing I AM statements of Jesus...interspersed with conversations...Jesus talking with PEOPLE...**PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME...**

Jesus will talk to sinners and saints...outcasts and religious...From His Mother Mary to an unnamed woman at the well...a Pharisee...to a man born blind...intimate friends like Mary and Martha and complete strangers like the paralyzed man who is superstitious and worn out...

There are crowds and groups...believers and naysayers...But then...there are the 12...ALL meant for you and I to come to one and ONLY one conclusion...

John 20:30-31... **“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”**

Think about those men we call the disciples...fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot...Jesus has called them, cared for, taught, empowered, sent, protected, Jesus has shown them things, rescued them, rebuked them, walked them through their

confusion, their doubts, their pride, their lack of faith to their lack of understanding...**Jesus has LOVED THEM...**

Jesus has just washed their feet...He has told them about Judas...although they don't get it yet...Jesus told them He was leaving them and that they are weaker than they think...**BUT...look at John 14:1**...Over and over again Jesus as comforted them and assured them...

John 15...really the whole Chapter can be broken down like this...

Jesus explains HIS LOVE FOR THE DISCIPLES...1-11

Jesus explains THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER...12-17

Jesus explains THEIR LOVE FOR A WORLD THAT WILL HATE THEM...18-21

Ultimately though...I don't think we can unpack what it means to LOVE EACH OTHER...until...we look at how JESUS LOVES US!

Look back at verse 9...

What are we actually doing as we gather together through various means to worship God???

We are celebrating the LOVE OF GOD for us...**but its celebrating IN COMMUNITY!**

Allow me to read this passage for us...

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Take a moment...stare at those words...consider them...what jumps out to you ABOUT God! ABOUT Jesus! ABOUT You!

Jesus tells us that love is actually...a Command...some have said this is the 11th commandment...Jesus said in Matthew that is the GREATEST COMMANDMENT! Do you remember? Matthew 22:34-40

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Do you see what Jesus is saying?

Notice how Jesus bookends this passage....THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT in verse 12 with THESE THINGS I COMMAND YOU in verse 17...BUT WHAT’S actually in between those two commands?

WHAT JESUS DOES HOW JESUS LOVES US!!!!

In other WORDS...you’ll NEVER LOVE, OBEY, be godly in your strength!! You’ll never clean yourself up...motivate yourself...and even if you try...it will feel burdensome, exhausting and...you’ll end up one of two ways...

Bitter and tired and wanting to quit...just to live for yourself...OR...

Self-Righteous, entitled, self-confident...you’ll live life feeling owed...you’ll know this by a sense of anger, a lack of being thankful and a complaining spirit...

Richard Phillips explained it this way...

“There are people who speak very casually about “the imitation of Christ,” some foolishly attempting to gain their way to heaven by being like Jesus. **An example of this emphasis is the once-popular WWJD jewelry and paraphernalia that boiled down the Christian faith to this question: “What Would Jesus Do?”**

The idea is that all we have to do in any situation is to know what Jesus would do and then do it ourselves. The problem with this approach is that it fails to realize that Jesus is unique in both his person and his saving mission.

In most situations, Jesus would do what we cannot do and, in some cases, should not do. The most important example is how Jesus responds to the sins of his people, laying down his uniquely perfect life as the once-for-all Sacrifice to atone for sin.

For this reason, the very heart of the Christian faith is what Jesus did for us, precisely because we could never do it for ourselves. We are saved not by doing what Jesus did but by trusting what Jesus did for our salvation.”

Certainly, Christians are commanded to follow and imitate Christ...Eph. 5:1

Yet the Bible does not tell us to do WHAT Jesus did; he commanded his disciples to do AS he did.

This is above all true when it comes to Jesus' love...

Having been loved by him with so great a redeeming love...we are to love others in a way that reflects his matchless grace. Jesus emphasized this truth to the disciples, saying, **“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”**

So...as we start our Journey of LOVE...we need to see that it's SO MUCH Deeper than the world's definition...The Beetles did say after all...ALL WE NEED IS LOVE... ☺ then they broke up....and herein lies the problem with the Beetle and the world...

Yet they think LOVE comes for you and me...**God's Word says it COMES FROM CHRIST and CHRIST ALONE!**

Today let's see three aspects of Jesus love for us and I submit...

IF...You trust Jesus Love, Apply Jesus Love, Live by Jesus Love and personalize Jesus Love...then and ONLY Then will we actually LOVE EACH OTHER...so much more...personally, relationally and communally...FIRST NOTICE WITH ME...that...In Christ...

1. We see the Sacrificial Love of Jesus

This is the FUNDAMENTAL principal that EVERY CHRISTIAN must think about, ponder, meditate on...This is not something you DID...this is what we

cling to EVERY DAY as we live LIFE...**We need to apply Jesus sacrificial LOVE to every aspect of life...for THEN and ONLY then will you offer this love to other PEOPLE in your life...**

The greatest example of the depth of love God expects is the subject of 15:13. **This “greater love” functions two ways:**

First, it is modeled IN Jesus, who laid down his life, but his is the deeper love, for he died not just for “his friends” but for “sinners” (Rom 5:8).

Second, it is the model FOR us, as in 1 John 3:16: **“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.”**

Jesus would yield his life in just a few hours, and as we emulate this love, we must be prepared for a possible future in which we surrender our lives, as many martyrs have done throughout church history.

Jesus is going to go and LAY DOWN HIS LIFE for these 11 men...**Jesus did this for you and for me...**

Jesus LOVED us so much HE gave up HIS RIGHTS...gave up HIS THRONE...but more than that...HE laid down HIS RIGHT AS A HOLY GOD...

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Dane Ortlund reminds us...**Jesus didn't just die for us...He walked THROUGH our death for us...Jesus didn't simply die...HE WAS CONDEMNED...Jesus ENDURED HELL for us...He wasn't deserving...JESUS absorbed our death, our sin, our pain...ALL to give us HIS LOVE...to give us HIS MERCY AND GRACE...This gives us VALUE and PURPOSE...it gives us hope and rest...it gives us peace and joy...it gives us a**

perspective on life and suffering...it calms us when we face questions and doubts...it protects us when we are hurt or experience the relationship pains we ALL face in this life...

THIS IS THE HEART OF JESUS! God sent Jesus...John 3:16...Jesus dies for us...Then Jesus rises from the dead...goes to God the Father who then send HIS SPIRIT and pours His Spirit into our souls...so that we can KNOW the LOVE OF JESUS and EXPERIENCE the LOVE OF JESUS and then DISPLAY OR SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS!

The love of God for Christians becomes the love of God between Christians.

But wait there is more...in John 15:12-13...this is a part I don't think we think about enough...

2. We see the Intimate Love of Jesus

Now...to appreciate verse 13-14 imagine it through the lens of Romans 5...

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Again...what jumps out to you??? How did God just speak to you???

Over and over again Paul wants you to PERSONALIZE THIS TO YOU...it's personal, it's intimate...it's not generic but specific...you have to do more than personalize it...YOU'VE GOT TO OWN IT...admit it, cry out for it...

WHILE WE WERE STILL WEAK...verse 6 Christ died for the ungodly...

WHERE WE WERE STILL SINNERS...verse 8 Christ died for us...YOU...ME...

WHILE WE WERE STILL ENEMIES...verse 10 Christ reconciled us to God by His death!!!

Jesus loves us so much God loves us so much...it's not a halfway or half-hearted love...it's not a moody love or earned based...

Think about it...

God loves us...as weak sinners who are enemies of ALL HE IS! AND STILL CHRIST COMES to earth to live for us and die for us and rise again for us and now lives for us ALL for God's GLORY and our benefit...that is why...

You can stop fighting, defending, justifying, you don't have to hide...you don't have to define yourself...you don't have to prove your worth it...you don't have to find a place in this world...

Satan doesn't love you...he wants to destroy you...the World doesn't love you...the world lies, is moody, changes, accepts one day only to reject the next...you have to earn the favour of the world...NOT SO WITH JESUS...

In Christ we have the ultimate RELATIONSHIP! It's safe, its focused, its once and for all...

We are called HIS FRIEND! Did you know that in the ENTIRE BIBLE only ABRAHAM is called the FRIEND of GOD?

Knowing Jesus gave up everything to give us HIMSELF...that HE know BOASTS in us...shows us OFF to Satan and the World...is it any wonder that Paul would say...

2 Corinthians 5:14 reminds us... **“For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died. And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.”**

When we were running from God...even though we smile or go to Church or try to do our best...when we look for love and meaning anywhere but God...when we RUN to the world...money, pleasure, stuff to find meaning...when we play games with God...using Him to fit our view of Him...

GOD STILL LOVED US!

This is why Paul says what He does in Galatians 2:20...Listen to this verse and consider how INTIMATE this is...

I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

John 15:12-16 and all these other verses scream out...**THE LOVE OF GOD has no limits**...no endpoint you can't exhaust the love of God...God NEVER CUTS US OFF...JESUS DIED TO PROVE THAT!!!

God's love is as expansive as God Himself!!!!

Think about that...If God didn't turn His back on you when we are STILL WEAK SINNERS...who or HOW...would or could...GOD TURN HIS BACK NOW that we are called FRIENDS...CHILDRENS...JOINT HIERS WITH CHRIST...we are called ambassadors, witnesses...stewards...we are the FAMILY OF GOD...

Which means...when we truly stare at this GREAT LOVE OF JESUS...

3. We see the MISSIONAL Love of Jesus

Jesus loves us for a reason...it's a love that has an outcome...You see if you know and believe and trust in the LOVE OF JESUS you will know this...

The only love that won't disappoint you is one--that can't change, that can't be lost, that is not based on the ups and downs of life or of how well you live, that not even death can take away from you. God's love is the only love like that.

Jesus models this to us:

Love is active. Love pursues. Love is always. I Corinthians 13...

In a sense, the one for whom a person would give his life is, **by definition, his friend**. Christian love therefore proceeds from the recognition of the love of God in the life-giving death of the Son.

Ephesians 2:4-5 **“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!”**

But watch now what Paul does next... **For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.**

For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

We’ve been loved, forgiven, changed, empowered for a MISSION...we have been given a message and a mission...we have MEANING...

Notice how Jesus connects, His Sacrificial, Intimate, MISSIONAL love to PRAYER and then to GOING...sounds like Matthew 9 doesn’t it? And makes sense with what follows too...Matthew 28...Luke 24...Acts 1:8...

We are called to love...that love drives us to pray...it’s a prayer for labourers...for people, for us to be witnesses, for us to have opportunities, for us to help make it possible...**GOD WILL NEVER not answer the prayer of MISSION!**

In fact, you might be able to say...we will or can gauge our love of Christ and love for each other by the urgency and passion of our desire for the LOVE OF GOD to be spread and shared with the LOST...but this is displayed by our LOVE OF EACH OTHER!

We are now called by God...through Jesus...filled with His Spirit...to GO and BE THE CHURCH...

And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children. And walk in love, as the Messiah also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.

“If cable news is keeping you from unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ, turn it off, unplug it, unsubscribe from it, and prioritize your church over cable.” Tik Tok...

"Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either." - Bonhoeffer

Sin is so comprehensive that it affects our reasoning. Someone offends us and we think vengeance is the proper response. Someone hurts us and we harden ourselves because pride and not vulnerability is considered “strong”.

God, renew our minds. Amen.

Now...let me ask you...

Do you see and feel the LOVE OF GOD FOR YOU?

DO YOU?

Then...apply this to everyone here...look around...do we want this TYPE OF LOVE to be known and felt by everyone here?

Think of those not here...think of the population of Orillia and your neighbourhood...think of your family...your friends...your coworkers...your fellow students...

Now...think of how they would be changed if they saw YOU loving LIKE JESUS???

For this is next level stuff...for now we are into what it means to LOVE OUR ENEMIES like Romans 12 tells us to do...

Conclusion:

AGAIN...don't let this thought just fly by you...consider the ramifications of what John 15:13-16 means...for its going to give power to verses 12 and 17 ...it's

going to give meaning to our Church life and our MISSION VISION...and it gives us a GUIDE for how to love AS JESUS HAS LOVED US...

Grant Osbourne reminds us... **“Our relationship with each other grows out of the internal relationship of the three members of the Godhead. All our relationships emerge and draw their energy from our relationship with Christ.**

This is the case at every level—husband-wife (1 Pet 3:7), parent-child (Eph 6:1–4), slave-master (Eph 6:5–8), and Christian-government (Rom 13:1–2; 1 Pet 2:13–17).

We cannot truly know the love of Christ without loving one another. Love cannot be abstract but must be concrete, lived out in daily life.”

Friends you must realize that these words...this reality of Jesus love for these disciples...so moved them, empowered them, changed them...it drove a sense of community, prayer, unity, purpose, passion and compassion...

It’s what fueled their mission and its HELD them together...

They loved being together SOOO much that whenever they gathered to celebrate the Lord’s Table...they would actually have a meal together first...

It was intimate...it was sacrificial...it was for a purpose...

THINK ABOUT THAT...

You need to understand...the biggest issue we have...is to know and apply the truth of Jesus loves me...

First...we honestly can’t believe that Jesus loves us THIS much and we don’t think about this enough....and because of that...

Second...we think IF someone else loves me like this...THEN I’ll love them back...

Were the whole realm of nature mine That were an offering far too small Love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all.