

As I Have Loved You
John 13:31-35 (NIV)
April 24, 2016

When [Judas] was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The text for today’s message is the last two verses of today’s Gospel reading: *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* (Jn 13:34-35 NIV).

Jesus tells us that we must love each other as he loves us. Jesus didn’t say “should,” he said “must.” That’s a very tall order. The kind of love Jesus is speaking of is completely foreign to our sinful nature. That being true, we are going to look at Jesus’ love for us. We are going to hold up our Savior as the model for us to pattern ourselves after.

Our first step is to define the love which Jesus is referring to. There are many types of love. The Greek word for the love Jesus has for us is (αγαπω) agape. Agape is an all-encompassing love. It has nothing to do with liking someone. It has nothing to do with emotions. Agape love is an act of will. It’s the love you display when your spouse or your children are really getting under your skin, but you love them anyway.

So no one misunderstands, we must begin with a disclaimer. No one on this side of the grave will ever love with the perfection of Jesus’ love. We are sinners. Our sinfulness limits what we are capable of doing. However, at the same time, our sinfulness is not an acceptable excuse for not doing our best to imitate Jesus’ love for us. With that understanding, let’s take a look at three aspects of Jesus’ love.

Our first consideration is: Jesus loves us without limits.

There is no end to the love of Christ. People come and go in our lives. There are relationships where we love someone for a while and then we stop loving them – divorce comes to mind. But this is never the case with Jesus.

Jesus said: *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13 NIV). Jesus showed the full extent of his love on the cross. The depth of Jesus’ love for his sinful creation is what took him to Calvary. No one forced Jesus to sacrifice himself for us. He willingly died for us. It has been rightly said that it wasn’t the nails that held Jesus on the cross – it was his love for us.

Besides the depth of Jesus’ love, there is the extent of his love. The apostle John opens his account of the Last Supper with these words: *It was just before the Passover Feast.*

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love (Jn 13:1 NIV).

There is no end to the love of Jesus. As finite creatures, we tend to think that there is an end to everything. Good times come and go. Bad times come and go. Relationships come and go. In fact, all things in this life will come to an end. Unless Jesus returns first, even our earthly lives will end.

But the love of Jesus knows no end. It isn't even bound by our span of years on the earth. Jesus loved us before we were here. He loves us while we are here. He will love us when we are no longer here. Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God told the people of Israel: *I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness* (Je 31:3 NIV).

Furthermore, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that can take Christ's love away from us. Paul told the Roman Christians: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Ro 8:35, 37-39 NIV).

Our second consideration of our Savior's love is: He loves us with a serving love.

This can be difficult for some people, even some Christian people, to fully accept. It runs against human rationale for us to see our God serving us. We are more comfortable thinking about us serving God. But Jesus told his disciples: *The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* (Mt 20:28 NIV).

When Jesus spoke of giving his life, he wasn't just speaking about his death on the cross. Jesus' entirely earthly life was devoted to serving others. When the people were hungry, Jesus fed them. When they were sick, or lame, or blind, or deaf, or mute, Jesus healed them. When people were outcasts from society, Jesus befriended them. When the people sinned because they followed Satan, Jesus prayed for them.

From the moment Jesus left the wonders of heaven and entered Mary's womb, to the moment he ascended from this earth back to his heavenly home, Jesus gave his life for others. And his service didn't stop at his ascension. Paul tells us: *Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us* (Ro 8:34 ESV). And the author of Hebrews writes: *Therefore [Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them* (Heb 7:25 NIV).

Our third point is: Jesus loves us with a personal love.

There is a deep warmth in Christianity that no earthly religion has. Christianity isn't centered around some cold, impersonal god. Christianity is based on a loving personal

relationship. Jesus loves each individual as an individual. He wants a personal, one on one, relationship with each of his children.

When Jesus said: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Mt 11:28 NIV), he was speaking to you, personally. This invitation is extended to all people, but it is extended to each person individually.

There is no sinner that Jesus refuses to have a relationship with. While he was on earth, he was personally involved with the prostitutes and tax collectors. Today, he is personally involved with liars, gossips, cheats, thieves, hypocrites, backsliders, and the like. We are all sinners, and Jesus loves each of us personally, in spite of who and what we are.

Jesus makes this promise to each person who puts their faith in him: *In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am* (Jn 14:2-3 ESV).

In the text, Jesus commands: *As I have loved you, so you must love one another* (Jn 13:34 NIV). What would it look like if we were to love each other as Jesus loves us?

If we follow in the steps of Jesus, then we will have a love that never fails. Our love for others will be stronger than steel; nothing will be able to stop us from loving our brothers and sisters. We would have the love described in 1 Corinthians: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away* (1 Co 13:4-8 NIV).

If we follow in the steps of Jesus, then we will have a love that is devoted to serving. We will feel a responsibility for both the physical and spiritual welfare of those around us. We will dedicate our lives to the betterment of others. We will never turn a deaf ear to a cry for help. We will always be ready with a meal. We will always be ready with a helping hand. We will always be ready with a shoulder to cry on. We will always be ready with the saving message of the Gospel.

While we have all been set free by the love of Christ, that freedom brings with it great responsibility: *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Ga 5:13-14 NIV).

If we follow in the steps of Jesus, then our love will be expressed on a personal level. As time goes on, our society is growing colder and colder. We have sunk so far many people would rather text a message to someone than speak to them. We are growing farther and farther apart. We need to take a lesson from the early church. We need to

grow into a more personal love.

Acts 2 beginning at verse 44: *All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved* (Ac 2:44-47 NIV).

My brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus didn't suggest we love each other as he loves us – he commanded it. He did so because he wants us to love with a perfect love. That kind of love makes the church grow stronger. It is also one of the most powerful witnesses the church can show to an unbelieving world.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (Jn 13:34-35 NIV).