

Sermon John 13:34-35

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The unit of thought is maybe as large as 13:31 through the end of Chapter 17. Jesus’ farewell discourse.

Subject: How will people know if have been given a new heart of love for God and his followers? How will people know you are real disciples?

Compliment: If you love one another as God has loved you.

Homiletical Idea:

Loving others as God loves you is the true mark of a Christian.

Introduction

Context/Background: John 13:34-35 takes place the night before the crucifixion. The disciples and Jesus had just shared what is now famously referred to as the Last Supper. Jesus had just predicted his betrayal, told John who would betray him, and Judas had just left the room with Jesus instructing him to do what he needed to do quickly. Jesus then begins to instruct the 11 remaining disciples on what to do when he (Jesus) leaves.

Jesus begins this in verse 33 of Chapter 13 with “My Children” in the NIV or “Little Children” in the ESV. This is interesting for a few reasons. I am not a Greek Scholar, but all the commentaries I looked at agreed, that this is the only time in the gospels where Jesus uses this exact phrase. In fact, it is the only time it is used in Scripture apart from the 7 times John uses it when later writing his first epistle. This phrase shows the tender emotions Jesus was having as he was facing separation from his Disciples that had followed him everywhere for the past 3 years.

33 “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.

And along with Jesus in the role of the Father, we see Peter playing perfectly the role of the child.

36 Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

37 Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now?”

Have you ever been a child being left somewhere by your parents? Maybe you are too old to remember that experience. Have you ever been a parent leaving your child or children behind somewhere? What do you do? You leave them with instructions.

I think about my own family, and when I leave on a trip, like the short business trip I will take this coming week. Be nice to your sister. Help you mother. Don’t stay up too late. And all of that is when they still have one parent home. What about on those rare occasions that Keri and I go out together for an evening, leaving the kids home alone!? Be nice to each other, and don’t fight. Clean up the kitchen after dinner. Listen to you brother/sister. Go to bed on time.

Jesus is in a situation where the disciples are being left alone, without their master. And, neither they nor he know how long they will be apart. I think the length and nature of the farewell discourse, which starts here and runs through the end of Chapter 17, testifies to the fact that this was a difficult time for Jesus. So, what were his first, or primary, instructions? Let’s look again at the sermon passage.

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

1. Jesus gives a new command.
 - a. Like “Little Children”, “A new command”, is a phrase that appears only in this one place in John, and then in John’s Epistles. Nowhere else in Scripture, but, why is this a new command? What makes it new?

One reason it is new is that there is a shift going on. Before, the command was following. John 1:43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Up until now, this is how people knew they were Jesus' disciples. They went wherever he went. Now, love is the command and this is how people will know they are Jesus' disciples. There is a shift going on, from physically following Jesus, to following his commands in his absence. But, I think there is much more to why this is a new command.

In Leviticus 19:18 it says "Love your neighbor as yourself". Loving others is not a new command. So what about this command is new? It is in the explanation how to love. In Leviticus, the old command, the explanation of how to love others is to love them the way you love yourself. The new command gives a different standard by which to love others, not as you love yourself, but as Jesus (God) has loved you.

- b. It is clear that this new command had a huge impact on John's life, and it seems that 1 John was written in large part to help explain this new command to Christians. I strongly recommend that this week you take the time to read 1 John

1 John 2: 8-9 "Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness."

In John's 3 letters he never talks about the love of Jesus, he talks about the love of God and the Love of the Father repeatedly. The love of Jesus is the love of God.

- c. n/a

- d. We have a new command, love one another as God has loved us.

So, now that we know what Jesus wants us to do in his absence as we wait for his triumphant return, let's look at the why, the how, and the so what.

2. Why are we to love others as God has loved us?

- a. Loving others as God loves you is the true mark of a Christian. Let's look once again at our sermon passage 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
- b. This is how Jesus tells the disciples that they will be known as his followers; the primary way by which Jesus' followers will be identified. John, who was a very young man at the time, understood who Jesus was (God himself), and took this command very seriously. Let's look again at some of John's writing in his first epistle.

1 John 3:10 "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister."

1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

1 John 4:7-8 "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

- c. John here illustrates the point both in the positive and the negative. Those whom consistently love are known as followers of God; those whom consistently do not love, are described as not knowing God.
- d. Loving others as God loves you is the true mark of a Christian.

Loving others as God loves you is the true mark of a Christian.

If we want to love as God and Jesus have loved us, we need to understand how Jesus and God have loved us.

3. How are we to love?

- a. We don't need to go too far to find an example of the type of love Jesus is requiring. John 13, the chapter where our sermon passage is taken, begins with Jesus modeling true servant-oriented love as he washes the disciples' feet. If you remember the story, it was more uncomfortable for the disciples than it was for Jesus; Peter even tried to reject Jesus' act of love. The kind of love we are called to in modeling what Jesus did cannot be based in pride, it is humbling, it is uncomfortable, and it is generally without glory, at least here on earth.
- b. John 13:14-15 says "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." Does this mean we should be washing each other's feet? Is this how Christians are to be known, by washing feet?

Not just washing feet, but the principle that we see here...

John 15:12-14 "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." Of course, Jesus literally laid down his life for us, but the principle carries through from the washing of the feet. Considering others to be better than yourself.

Philippians 2:5-8 "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

- c. n/a
- d. But, how. How can we possibly love like this?

4. How can we love like this?

- a. There is only one way to be able to love like this. And, we again, do not need to look too far to find the answer.
- b. Continuing on in the farewell discourse, Jesus reveals the secret for being able to love like this: John 15: 1-10 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

This ties directly into the last two core values and those sermons. The practical ways to remain in Him are through the reading of His word and through prayer.

The image of the vine and the branches is a powerful one where we can see the direct connection between the health of the branch and its connection to the vine. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. God the Father is the gardener that shapes and prunes the branches to bear good fruit.

- c. n/a
- d. We now what we are to do, why we are to do it, how to do it, how it is possible for us to do it, but the final question is what difference will it make?

5. What difference does it make? It is love that sets us apart. It is love that makes the difference. It is love that makes Christianity attractive. It is through love we imitate our Savior. It is love that opens the door to the Gospel.
- a. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” Without love, nothing else we do matters.
 - b. A doctor and nurse in Asia wanted to treat patients in a notorious prison hospital. They finally got permission, but were forbidden to share the gospel. When they arrived, the smell was unbearable. The toilets and ward were filthy. They could only stay one hour. They decided on the next visit to clean the toilets and ward. They asked a local church to help. Cleaning supplies, gloves, gowns, and masks were assembled. Everything was scrubbed clean, even the toilets. The gospel was not proclaimed in words. The authorities were overwhelmed. They now allow the volunteers to treat the prisoners anytime, with complete freedom to speak of Christ. (Moffitt 2006, 13)
 - c. n/a
 - d. What are we doing to overwhelm people with love?

Loving others as God loves you is the true mark of a Christian.

Conclusion:

I know it has been said that we have 6 core values and that they are not in any particular order; there is none more important than the other. I am not sure that The Apostle John or the Apostle Paul would agree. I am not sure Jesus would agree. Everything else we do must flow from a heart of love. Close your eyes and listen to these words from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, 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."

What does the world think when the church is not patient, when the church is not kind. What does the world think when Christians are stepping on top of each other to get to the position they want? What does the world think when our love fails. Are we opening doors to share the gospel through our love-filled lives, or are we closing doors by failing to love? We need each other to hold us accountable to the standard Jesus has set for us in our interaction, and if one thing can mark this church, I pray that it is love. Please pray with me.

Prayer, and don't forget the offering.

Benediction: 1 John 4:9-11 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."