

Text: John 15 11-17

Title: "Love one another"

Time: 8/20/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: At the beginning of 2023, we began together our look at the Gospel of John. We have learned that the purpose of the author is to encourage readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they might have life through His name (20:31). We also learned who the author of this Gospel is, the Apostle John. Though he never names himself, he describes himself as the one whom Jesus loved. He further wrote concerning himself, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24). John's Gospel possesses scriptural authority.

Since February we have been surveying together some of the unique theological themes of the Gospel of John. John's Gospel is that last of the four written, and it is noticeably different from the three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which came before it.

John emphasizes truth and witness. Truth comes from Christ to those who will listen. God's witness to the truth has (1) a cause - to save the lost, (2) validation from John the Baptist, Jesus's works, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and the Scripture He gave to us. Finally, (3) God's witness has multipliers, people like the Samaritan woman and the man born blind, people like you and like me.

Next, we saw that John's Gospel is about light and glory. God's light is Jesus Christ. Our darkness hates this light, but through God's power to save, God's light can become our light. This light shines in glory for us to see. Jesus's

glory is that of the unique Son of God, it is full of grace and truth, and it is His willingness to suffer on the cross for you and me. He was “lifted up” on the cross.

By May we were focused on eternal life and saving belief from John’s Gospel. Eternal life is in Jesus Christ, received by believing, and a present possession of true believers. We have already passed from death to life. True believers have saving belief. It is belief in what is true, not imaginary, or false, belief in God’s witness rather than man’s lies, and belief in God’s power to save the sinner through Christ.

More recently we have seen John’s emphasis on the Trinity, not only Jesus, God the Son incarnate, but also God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father has an incomprehensibly eternal, loving, exclusive, intermingling, validating, and sending relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. He gives believers to His Son, seeks their correct worship, and enables them to serve Him fruitfully, like a vinedresser cares for his vine.

The Third Person of the Trinity is given three titles in John’s Gospel: the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Truth; and the Paraclete/Comforter/Helper. As the Holy Spirit, He battles against the spirit of the age produced by our sin. As the Spirit of Truth, He battles against seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, having given us the New Testament through His work of inspiring apostles and prophets. And as the Paraclete/Comforter/Helper, he keeps us from becoming orphans, battling the spirit of abandonment and loneliness that our enemy uses against us.

And now this morning our list of John’s major themes has come to its final two. They form a contrast in the mind of our Savior in our passage, as Jesus addresses the disciples

on the night of His crucifixion in the Farewell Discourse of the upper room (15:17-18). On the one hand, John's Gospel has some very important things to say about the phrase *one another*, and on the other he addresses with great focus the contrasting phrase *the world*. The nature of the contrast is easy to see: on the one hand we must love one another, and on the other we must face a world that will hate us.

This morning I want us to see three things about our need to love one another from John's Gospel.

I. *Love one another* is a Christological commandment (vv. 12, 14, 17).

Illustration: Last week yahoo.com carried a news story announcing that the summer of 2023 has been "the summer of divorce." After noting the "start-studded" breakups of people like Brittany Spears, Ariana Grande, and Justin Trudeau, the article offered advice on how to know whether your spouse is "falling out of love with you."

Application: I had a pastor in South Carolina who would remind the flock of God from time to time that "you fall into mudpuddles; you do not fall in love." And if you do not fall in love, you do not fall out of love either. Pastor Gray believed what he did about love because he knew from His Bible that love is primarily a commandment to be obeyed, not merely an emotion to be felt.

Jesus tells us this is true when it comes to our love for one another as His disciples. He does not say "This is my therapeutic perscription for you, that ye love one another." He says rather, "This is my commandment for you, that ye love one another." In the larger context of our passage, obeying this commandment is the fruit the Father looks for

as the vinedresser of His Vine (15:1-2, 8, 10, 12). To fail to obey this commandment is to become unfruitful, and to become unfruitful is to risk removal from the Vine.

God views our love for one another as a commandment because He understands that His true love is covenantal love, and covenants are the commandments we are willing to obey to prove that our love is real. Marriage vows are that. Local church covenants are that too. Hear the love commitments from our church's covenant, to which every member commits himself:

"We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines: to give it a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel through all nations." [Para. 2]

"We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay." [Para. 4]

*Love one another* is a commandment because it is God's love that we share with one another, and God's love is always a covenantal, promise-keeping love. He keeps His commitments to us in His love for us, and He expects us to obey Him in our love for one another. When we do, our church will know the same blessing other churches have known, like the Thessalonian church did: "But as touching brotherly

love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

II. *Love one another* is a new commandment (vv. 12b-16; 13:34).

Application: Love is, of course, as old as God, because God is love. God's command to His people to love one another is very old as well. The law of Moses told them to love each other as themselves (Lev. 19:18, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord").

But Jesus claims in 13:34 that His commandment to His disciples to love one another is something new, and He explains why: "as I have loved you." That is the part that is new. Jesus wants His disciples to love each other the way that He has loved us. In every act of love for His disciples, He desired that they show the same for one another, like washing feet (v. 14). We often think of this high bar as given to husbands, whom Paul instructs to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). But that command is based on this prior command, that we as believers must love one another the way Christ loved the church.

Illustration: I once visited a brother in the Lord with an invitation to come to church, and he explained to me that the reason he was not going to come was that his wife did not share his faith and that he felt obligated to love her the way that Christ loved the church, which he deemed to require his staying home with her on Sunday. But Paul never meant for us to love our wife instead of the church whom Christ loved as His wife. A Christian husband's love for his wife is a part of every man's duty to love all of God's people the way Jesus loves them.

How does Jesus love us? He calls us His friends and lays down His life for us (v. 13). He communicates transparently with us (v. 15). He disciplines us to become more fruitful for God (v. 16).

And returning to the Apostle Paul, we find other ways we must love one another as Christ has loved us:

Rom. 15:5, 7 “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus . . . Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God”;

Gal. 6:2, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” [i.e., the new commandment];

Eph. 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”;

Col. 3:16, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Clearly, forgiveness is one of the most important parts of loving one another.

*Love one another* is a new commandment because we have the example of Christ to follow in our love for one another.

III. *Love one another* is a necessary commandment (13:35).

Illustration: One of our sister churches has invited us to a conference that is focused on using media technology to reach out as a local church. The invitation I received spoke of the talents of the speaker this way: “He is an incredible artist with a keen eye and sharp mind to precisely express ideas through media. He has served in large churches and small church plant ministries designing informational brochures and promotional materials for VBS, special meetings/conferences, designing history walls, mission walls,

welcome centers, and developing church and ministry logos and branding.”

Application: I do praise the Lord for this brother’s giftedness, and I am sure that there are some good things that can be learned there. But I know that this speaker and my friend, the host pastor, would point to our verse and say, “This is really the only way for all men to know that we are Jesus’s disciples.” I wonder whether, in our reliance on things like social media and graphic design to let all men know who we are, we have forgotten that if we just would love one another the way we should it would happen.

Imagine what the rest of New Boston would think if believers in New Boston really loved one another the way Christ loved us. That would be amazing, as I am sure you would agree. Where is that to start? Let’s work on becoming a local church that loves each other the way that Christ loves us. It is a command we must obey; a new command pointing us to Jesus’s example; and the only way those who know us will also know that we are Jesus’s disciples.

Conclusion: Of course, when we read that Jesus wants us to love one another the way He has loved us so that everyone who knows us will also know that we are His disciples, we are reading about a very difficult thing to accomplish. We might call it a very high bar.

The sport of Olympic pole-vaulting involves a very high bar. The current record holder cleared a bar set 20 feet 4 and 3/4’s inches high, more than twice the height of a basketball hoop. No one can jump over a bar that high, unless he has a lot of skill with the right kind of pole. It is the pole and the athlete’s dependence upon the pole that allows him to soar to these heights.

This is a fitting analogy for how reaching the high bar of loving one another works for you and me. Our pole is Christ, whom we find in His Word. He causes us to abide in Him and His love while His words abide in us (15:4-7). When that happens, we abide in His love – which includes loving the way He loves (vv. 8-10).

Open His book in the morning, then bend the knee praying over what you have just read, and the Holy Spirit will change you from someone who naturally loves yourself, your money, and your pleasure into someone who can spend that day as a disciple of Christ, abiding in His love, who loves his fellow disciples like Christ does. The pole will send you flying over the high bar.

A last question for us to ponder: Do we know anyone who knows that we are Jesus's disciple because of the way we have loved our brothers and sisters in Christ here?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*