

Loved to Love

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[0 : 00] John chapter 15, beginning in verse 12.

! If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together. 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. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing.

But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another. May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? Though the Bible clearly and repeatedly commands Christians to love one another, the sad truth is that so often Christians don't.

[1 : 34] I've known people who have been so badly wounded by someone or something in the church that they left the church either for a long time or for good. A church hurt hurts deeply, and it takes time to heal from.

You know, sometimes a church can be so hurtful that they are better known in their community not for their love, but for their history of division, how they've split, how they have had numerous business meetings that were contentious, and how they seem to always have divisions.

You know, we can look at our Bibles, and we think that the churches there were perfect, that they always got along, but the reality is they didn't, especially the church that was in Corinth.

Corinth was founded by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. It was located in southern Greece, and it was known for its worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. In worshiping her, the Corinthians participated in all kinds of lewd acts of immorality, and many of their practices would fit right in with what we see happening in our culture today.

[2 : 53] The church that Paul planted in Corinth experienced a difficult time breaking from the influences of that culture, and it was causing them problems.

Another problem they had was that after Paul left them to go to Ephesus sometime afterwards, a man named Apollos came and ministered to them, and Apollos was a gifted preacher, and many of them in that church decided that, you know what, we're of Apollos.

We like that guy. Ah, that Paul guy, I'm not so sure about him. And so they formed a clique. And then another clique formed, and they said, well, you know what, we are of Paul.

We are Paulites, right? And then still another group said, no, we're only of Christ alone. And so these cliques were causing divisions within this church that was creating more and more problems. They fractured their unity. As a result of that, their witness was poor to their community. Selfishness and pride plague churches.

[4 : 05] They saw their spiritual gifts not as something to use in service to one another, but as something to boast and brag about. And so after addressing a lot of their issues in his letter in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed a major issue that was at the root of many of the problems that they experienced, and it was the fact that these people did not love one another.

They didn't love one another well. And so I want to read 1 Corinthians chapter 13. A lot of times that passage is read at weddings, but the appropriate context for this Scripture is in the church, not so much between a man and a wife, but a brother and sister in Christ.

Look at what Paul has to say here. It defines, he defines love perfectly. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have all faith so as to

remove mountains, but have not love, look, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have and deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind.

Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

[5 : 33] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecy, some of these other gifts that they boasted about and wanted, they will pass away.

As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child.

I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So now, faith, hope, and love abide. These three, but the greatest of these is love. And so in our text today, Jesus is likewise urging his disciples to love one another.

John chapters 14 through 16 contain Jesus' last teaching to his disciples before he is arrested and crucified. He is preparing them in these moments for those upcoming events, but not just for what will soon happen, but what will happen after his crucifixion, when he is resurrected and then when he later ascends back to heaven to the right hand of the Father.

[6 : 54] He's preparing them, and he will commission them for a task. And that's what he's preparing them for right here, right now, to continue in his ministry of reconciliation, to continue to advance his gospel.

And in order for his disciples to be disciple makers, he is making it clear to them that it is critical that they love one another. And the same is true for us today in the church.

Our church has a mission. Our church has been called to bear fruit. And as we saw last week, fruitful branches are those that abide in Christ, those that abide in his word, and they are those then that abide in his love.

And I believe that the measure of our church's success will be measured by how much we love one another. And I don't know about you, but I hope, and I just heard Wes.

Wes hopes too that you want to see our church, and I mean it, not just healthy, but thriving. That our church will be used more and more to impact the lives of those who belong to it, who are in the community surrounding it, and to the world.

[8 : 20] And for that to happen, to a greater extent, you must love the people in the pews that are sitting right next to you right now.

In God's eyes, when you belong to a church, you belong to his family.

When he saves you, he makes you his child. In his eyes, we are not merely acquaintances with one another. We are his children. We are brothers and sisters whom he has adopted into his family.

We are his cherished children whom he loved enough to send his son to die for. And so listen, if your enemies are members of your church, if the people in life that you most want to avoid and least want to see are members of your church, then you have a huge problem.

And I can't stress that enough. It's huge. It's huge. The Lord means to deal with that problem today, if that is the case for you, through his word.

[9 : 37] And today, we see clearly that his word instructs us that Jesus commands, our main idea, Jesus commands his disciples to love one another.

Jesus commands you, his disciple, to love others, love his church.

And so in this passage, there are three features or aspects concerning this command that Jesus gives to his disciples who would make up his church, which we're a part of, that we love one another.

And so again, my hope is that you will grow in your understanding of what our Lord commands regarding your love for the people in this church, and that the Holy Spirit will then convict us all to seek and to grow in our love for one another.

And so the first aspect or the first feature of this command from the very get-go is this. Jesus demands, he demands his disciples to love one another.

[10:45] Verses 12 and 17, the beginning and the ending of this paragraph, serve as bookends to our Lord's instruction, and they make it clear that he is not suggesting that his disciples love one another.

He demands that his disciples love one another. Look again at the beginning of verse 12. This is my commandment, that you love one another. And then he ends it, this part of the command, in verse 17 by saying, these things I command you so that you will love one another.

Commandment in verse 12 is a noun. In the Greek, it's entole, which means an injunction or a precept or an order. Jesus, again, is not making suggestions.

He is giving orders here. In verse 17, their command is expressed as a verb. And in the Greek, it is written in the present indicative mood, which means that Jesus is expecting that his order is obeyed immediately.

This isn't something to wait on, you know, hey, after I die and I'm resurrected, then you start loving one another. No, he's saying right now, as I speak, this order that I give to you is something I expect you to obey.

[12:01] So the first aspect or feature of our Lord's command for us to love one another is that he demands it. He expects his commands to be obeyed, not sometime later, but right this minute.

Again, this isn't a request or a suggestion. This is a demand. Jesus demands his disciples love one another. It's not optional. There is no other option he presents to them.

And in the second half of verse 12, he stipulates that the kind of love that the disciples are to have for one another is, as I have loved you. Now, here's where we might want to pump the brakes a little bit, thinking, you know, there's no way that I can love these people to that degree.

Jesus is God. Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice of love for others. And there's just no way that I can match that kind of love.

In a very true sense, you'd be right to think that way. No one else could ever die for you to atone for your sins but the sinless Son of God.

[13:14] No one will ever love you more than he loves you. No one else can make that great of a loving sacrifice for you. Yet, Jesus repeatedly expressed that this is what he expects.

This is his desire for us to seek to love one another in ways that reflect his great love for us. If you turn back to John chapter 13, verse 34, there, if you remember, Jesus has just washed his disciples' feet.

And then he instructs them to follow his example. And this is what he says to them. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you.

You also are to love one another. Now, this moment happened. There's no breaks. There's no going to bed between what Jesus said here in John 13 and what he's saying here in John 15 about their love for one another.

He's stressing the importance of that. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18 does instruct God's people to love your neighbor as yourself. So, it's not new in that sense, but there are elements that Jesus adds to this, or changes, I should say, to this command, which makes it new.

[14:29] The first change that he makes is from neighbor to one another. And then the second change he makes is from yourself to as I have loved you.

Christian love has Christ as its model and the community of believers as the primary place in which that love is to be expressed.

The Bible says when a person is saved that that person is born again, that that means they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And with that comes a transformation.

This person has a new set of desires, one of which is to love those whom God has saved. And we understand that because of what he's done for us, he's made it possible for us to love in ways like him.

In the first epistle that John wrote, he makes this observation continually that a person who calls themselves a Christian, a disciple, a follower of Christ, but does not have love for other Christians, is someone who does not truly know Christ.

[15:43] I want to read a bunch of things that John wrote in 1 John, inspired obviously by the Holy Spirit. Look at what he says about the importance of this and what it reveals about us if we love or do not love one another.

1 John 2, 9 through 11. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. He's talking about salvation there. And does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 John 3, 10. By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

You see what he's saying there? You are a child of the devil. If you do not love the people of God. That's a pretty strong indictment. 1 John 4, 7 through 8.

[16:49] We continue. Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

1 John 4, 20. If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

1 John 5, 1. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

From these scriptures, we are confronted with the reality that if you hate someone whom God has saved, you don't know God.

That's what it says. Which means if you don't know God, you don't have salvation. He has not truly saved you.

[17:59] Hatred is not a fruit of the Spirit. Now look, we don't always get along, do we? And families that love one another, they don't always get along.

We don't always see eye to eye on every little thing. We don't always share the same priorities either. And we sin.

We're not perfect. We're not righteous yet. Justified. But we're waiting glory when that sin nature is totally gone. And so we sin against one another in ways that hurt.

But God has given us instruction, hasn't he, on how to handle those differences? And he's told us repeatedly that as we handle those differences, the motivation for us in having those confrontations is love for the person that you're going to confront.

Because you, deep down in your heart, love them. And you want what's best for them. And whenever your relationship with a member of your church is strained, it should break your heart to the point where you say, I've got to go and talk to this person because I want to be restored with them.

[19:20] I want their fellowship rather than I would not have it. When a brother or sister in Christ is living a lifestyle that contradicts their confession, in love we go to them.

Because we care about them. And we want what's best for them. And so you see, in God's family, there is no room for a grudge.

God does not hold grudges against you, does he? You were born sinful just like me. And even after he's saved you, you've continued to sin like me.

But in love, what does he do? Hold a grudge? Ah, forget you. Too many times. He forgives us.

He's merciful to us. He's gracious to us. Over and over and over again. And so how could you be the recipient of so much love and so much grace and withhold it from others?

[20:31] So if your ego and your pride are more important to you than obedience to Jesus Christ, you have a huge problem.

A huge problem. Jesus demands that those whom he loves love one another. And he can give such demands because you know what?

He's God. He can give us those commands. But also, not only is it that he's God, but he's shown us how. And so secondly, we see that Jesus demonstrates the kind of love that his disciples must have for one another.

He demands it, and then he demonstrates the kind of love that his disciples must have for one another. Beginning in verse 13, Jesus proceeds to fan into flame the disciples' love for one another by speaking to them about how he himself will demonstrate his love for them.

He says, If someone laid down their life for you, you wouldn't have any doubt that that person loved you.

[21:41] Or you shouldn't have any doubt that that person loved you. Even if, you know, sometimes, you know, guys, we say to a good friend, I would die for you. Or to our spouse, I would take a bullet for you.

And I think that you truly mean that. It reminds me of a time in elementary school. In fifth grade, there was a boy in my grade. His name was Bernie.

And Bernie was a good kid. Bernie never got in trouble. He never got sent to the principal's office. He never bullied anyone. He never even said bad things about any of the rest of us.

But Bernie was a little bit different, if you know what I mean. And it was those differences that caused a lot of us, including myself, to tease him.

And to tease him a lot. Kids just weren't that nice to Bernie. He was in my fifth grade class. And I remember for the first time we, you know how you do tornado drills and fire drills.

[22 : 41] Well, for the first time we did an intruder drill. And this was pre-Columbine. And so, in our classroom, we didn't have walls that went floor to ceiling.

And we didn't have doors. So, all these classes were just lined up with these little partitions separating them. All that to say, there was not many places to hide. And so, our teacher gave us the instruction that if there was an intruder, that we were all to huddle over in a corner by her desk.

Which meant that some of us were going to be on the outermost edge. And she would be there protecting us. But there was room for someone else. And so, she asked for a volunteer.

And she said, which one of you would be willing to stay on the outside with me? And to try and make light of a potentially really scary situation, she said, which one of you wants to bite the bullet for the rest of us?

And without hesitation, Bernie shot his hand up. And he said, I'll do it. I'll bite the bullet for you guys. And he did it with so much joy.

[23 : 44] And he took it extremely seriously. I mean, he was getting as far out as he could just to try to make sure that none of us would get hit by a bullet.

And I'll tell you, I remember thinking, how can someone who has been treated so poorly by the rest of us be willing to make such a sacrifice for us?

And I'll tell you, when Bernie volunteered to do that for us, it made us see him a lot differently. He was a kid who loved us, though we didn't love him.

Now, he never had to bite a bullet for us. He never had to stand in our place and die for us. But Jesus did, and Jesus truly agonized on the cross as he hung there, beaten, bloodied, and exposed. He died for his people's sins. He suffered God's wrath for the sins that we have committed. He didn't just say he'd do it. He did it.

[24 : 52] So how much more then should we honor someone like him? Someone who truly died for his enemies to save them so that he could make them his friends. That he would stoop so low to sacrifice himself for us models the kind of sacrificial love then that we should have for one another.

And so therefore, loving like Christ means crucifying an attitude that continually asks, what's in it for me? What's in it for me?

Instead, we must embrace the instructions of Philippians 2, 3 through 4, which says, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Loving like Jesus is sacrificial, and it's loving in a humble way. I think C.S. Lewis defined humility better than anyone else.

He said, humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. And as we seek to others sacrificially, we are not devaluing ourselves in the process, but thinking more, not of me and what I want and what I need, but Jesus and what he's done and how great a Savior I have, and then others whom he has saved.

[26 : 20] That's what it means to love like Christ. That's how he has loved us. That's how he has loved you. If you think less about yourself and more about Jesus, you will be compelled to love his bride, the church, more.

And so in verse 14, we learn that the love Jesus demonstrated was sacrificial, but also not based on merit, and it's an active kind of love.

In verse 14, he says, you are my friends if you do what I command you. So again, here Jesus makes it clear that he does not choose his friends based upon their obedience first.

Jesus isn't saying, if you obey my commands, then you'll be my friends. If you obey my commands, I'll invite you to my birthday party or something like that. He's making the point that friendship with him is then characterized by obedience to him because Jesus has made you his friend, thus you obey him.

And I think of it like this. Say a person becomes friends with their boss. And over time, their relationship flourishes and they feel like they're in tight with whoever their boss is.

[27 : 43] And so they start showing up a little late to work every once in a while. And then, you know, not only are they showing up late to work, but they're taking an extra 30-minute break for lunch or an hour.

They think that, you know, my boss is my friend. He'll let me do whatever I want. But a true friend wouldn't do that, would they? Because they would care about their friendship. They would care about making their boss, their friend, their superior look good.

Jesus makes us his friends in salvation. But we can never forget that we are never equal to Jesus. And the love that we have for him for bestowing such an honor upon us to be called his friends is characterized by the lives that we live then in obedience to him.

And he commanded in verse 10, or as he commanded in verse 10, he expects us to abide in his love, which means that we are to be actively showing our love for Christ.

And we do that by showing how much we love one another in this church. Jesus demonstrates his love for us sacrificially, actively. It's not just lip service.

[28 : 59] He doesn't just say, I love you, but then not show us any indication that he really does.

And he loves us also demonstrably in a way that shows that true love, Christ-like love, is relational, as we see in verse 15.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

And so, to me, it's as if Jesus is saying to his disciples here, you know, I've related to you as a master relates to his students. You have been my disciples.

I've enrolled you in my school. I have been your professor. You have been my pupils, my subordinates. But today is graduation day. And from now on, I want you to look to me not just as your master, as your teacher, but also as your friend.

I know I've talked about my favorite teacher many times to you before, Dr. Aubrey, my preaching teacher at Midwestern.

[30 : 06] I love that man. He was such a great teacher because not only did he have great things to teach us, but you knew he cared about you.

For example, we'd have chapel on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most of the faculty would sit up at the front. Dr. Aubrey would always, it seemed, find one of his students in the back just to sit by and to chat with.

He is the kind of person who would stay after class and continue to give constructive criticism and feedback to try to make you better at the calling to preach God's Word.

And he was someone that was approachable. You could just talk to him. And you could talk to him just about anything. And you knew that he cared. And it's interesting because after I graduated from Midwestern, my relationship with him actually deepened.

He would come and visit my church when I would preach. And we were, I just was able to know him on another level, a deeper level.

[31 : 17] But listen, he was my friend, but he was always Dr. Aubrey. I would never call him by his first name, even if he had asked me to, because I had so much reverence and respect for him and for what he had taught me and what he had done for me.

So let's not forget that Jesus is friend of sinners. That if you've been saved, then yes, Jesus is your friend.

But don't forget that he is first your Lord and your Savior. It is him who you worship and no other. None of us whom God has saved, also we must understand none of us whom God has saved are more or less saved by him.

You know what I'm saying? We're not more or less loved by him. At the foot of the cross and before the throne of Jesus, we are all standing on equal ground.

All of us has fallen short of God's glory. All of us are sinful. All of us in need of a Savior. And all of us forgiven by his grace. He's a friend who doesn't play favorites.

[32 : 34] And so this is how I think our understanding of these things should play out in our church. Galatians 3, 27 through 28 says, For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

So when you were saved, you were forever united to Christ. The Bible says that positionally, as a result of your salvation, you are forever in Christ.

Meaning that you have shared in his death and in his resurrection. Being baptized into him means that you share in those things. And that also you have been clothed.

You have been draped in his righteousness. In turning from sin, you now have put on Jesus Christ. And therefore, must put on Christ also in your relationships to other people who he has united to himself in his body, the church.

[33 : 39] And so, this verse does not do away with distinctions, but divisions. We're distinct from one another, but those distinctions should never cause us to create divisions within this church.

Each person in this church, no matter their age, their gender, their race, the size of their bank account, or their level of education, is someone God loves and has also commanded you to love. There's no excuse to say, well, I don't get along well with young people. Or I don't, I don't, I don't get along well with older people. There's no option.

They are in the body of Christ. You put on Jesus Christ and you love them as he has commanded you to. Loving them sacrificially, actively, and relationally.

You should know the people that you go to church with. And you should serve the people in your church. And you should be thinking when you come here, not just of, of what other people aren't doing to serve you better, but how can I better serve those, Lord, who are around me, who are in this church?

[34 : 58] And then in verse 16, Jesus tells us what, what such love will produce. Jesus defines what his disciples love for one another will produce.

in verse 16, he defines what his disciples love for one another will produce. Jesus begins in verse 16 by saying, you did not choose me, but I chose you.

And so here, Jesus makes sure the disciples don't forget that the privileges that they have enjoyed in knowing him was never and is never based upon their own merit.

He called them. He chose them. It wasn't because they were smarter. It wasn't because they were wiser. It wasn't because they were more beautiful or better than anyone else.

No, their salvation and their calling and their relationship with him was based only upon Jesus' choosing them. And so, you know, in church, we will be surprised at times by whom God calls to our congregation.

[36 : 08] And you know, it may be the case that he saves someone who you know real well and you know their past and maybe they've hurt you in the past and you can be tempted to think, you know what, God, not them.

No, can't do it. Can't do it. It was all good. I've got to, I've got to go somewhere else. I cannot love this brother or this sister.

You might even doubt that they've been truly saved at all. Listen, we have attitudes like that. what we need to do is remember who you were before God saved you.

And you need to remember that you were not saved because you were some great person that God just had to have on his team. You were lost in your sin and without hope and he called out to you and he saved you by his grace.

And we know that God saves sinful people. We don't know whom he will save but we know that he does save. And so that should cause us as those who have been saved by him, as those who have experienced the love of Christ, it should cause us to want to share that love with others.

[37 : 38] Especially those who have not known it, those who are lost, those who have not been saved. And so Jesus continues in verse 16 talking about our love for one another and how it is defined by our missional perspective that we are to go and bear fruit.

In verse 16 he says that he has appointed you or I have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. And so a church that loves Christ and a church that loves one another is defined by its level also for its love for lost people, the people who are not here or not a part of this church or who may never join our church as long as they are part of the church.

As Jesus said in John 13, 35, our love for one another will create inroads into reaching the lost people of our community. In John 13, 35 he says by this all people will know that you are mine, that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

said another way, if we don't love one another, the world will not know that we are in Christ and are his disciples and they will not care at all what we have to say to them.

And I hope none of us wants that kind of reputation for our church. So our love for one another will be defined by our love for those who are not here, our love to be a part of the great commission which the Lord has commanded us to be a part of.

[39 : 12] Also, our love for one another will be defined by us having a long-term vision. Look at what Jesus says again in verse 16. He's saying that also that your fruit should abide.

And so I take from this to mean a loving church desires that the fruit it produces is fruit that remains, fruit that abides, that the disciples make disciples who continue to abide in Christ.

And so a loving church cares not just about its present but about its future. And I hope that this church, Highland Park Baptist Church, is still here when Christ returns.

Should that be a hundred years from now or one thousand years from now and every single one of us is gone from this place, I hope that there is still a group here, don't you?

That there's still a group here that is bearing fruit and advancing the kingdom of God. Now that's truly for God to determine but I do believe that as we love one another and as we invest in our young people's lives and as we show them what it means to love one another as a church and what it looks like there will be a biting fruit that comes from that.

[40 : 38] They'll in turn model that I believe. In John 9 62 Jesus said no one puts his hand to the plow and looks back and is fit for the kingdom of God. We are to be looking forward to what God will do and a loving church is a church that thrives because while it is thankful for what God has done in the past it is anticipating and preparing and looking forward to what God is going to do in its future.

Isn't that what Jesus is doing here? He's with his disciples and he's not saying you know what guys remember remember that time the loaves and the fishes you know man I I astonished you didn't I? You didn't think it was going to happen man boom there it was we fed thousands of people that was a great day. Remember when I talked to the woman at the well and how she went and she shared me with her community and they all were coming back.

Remember how her life was so transformed remember you see what we did back then that's not where Jesus mind is it's not on what has been done but what he will do and so our church likewise a church that loves like him will be defined by the fact that it is thankful and celebrates what the Lord has done in the past but is looking forward to him continuing to do more and more in their future and so we are actively seeking to put to death selfishness divisiveness and grudges that are within our church and if we are actively loving each other in humble and sacrificial ways our priorities as a church will be in order.

We will know and we will pursue God's will for our church and he will answer our prayers. That's what he promises here so that whatever you do, whatever you ask I should say the Father in my name he may give to you.

[42 : 41] That's the promise. If my church loves like me if my church has its priorities in order because it loves one another truly my church will know my will and my church will pray and they will ask and my Father will answer.

That's an amazing promise. Do you doubt it? Do you doubt it? Do you want to see God answering our prayers to be used by him to bear more fruit?

And if you do then you will take seriously his command that you love the people in this church because if you don't it hampers our fruit bearing abilities.

In John 17 as Jesus concludes his teaching we still have time to go before we get there he prays to the Father and I want to read to you a portion of his prayer in which he prays for you and I specifically and listen to what our Lord requests of God the Father.

I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word that is you that is me that they may all be one just as you Father are in me and I in you that they may also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me the glory that you have given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one I in them and you in me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me.

[44 : 31] Want to reach a lost world then love the people in your church. Father I desire that they also whom you have given me may be where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Oh righteous Father even though the world does not know you I know you and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

So the main point of application for this message is this Christians must love one another because too much is lost if they don't.

We must love one another because our witness our health our vitality as a congregation will be lost if we don't.

So four questions of application three of which we'll discuss tonight at 630 invite you to come be a part of that. Question number one what causes grumbling and division in the church?

[45 : 51] James 4 1 through 4 tells us exactly what those things are. What causes grumbling and divisions in the church?

Question number two what is the greatest act of love or sacrifice that you have witnessed firsthand? What is the greatest act of love or sacrifice that you have witnessed firsthand?

And then did that act of love or sacrifice change you and your relationship with others in any way? Just to think about that. How you have been loved by the people of God in his church in ways that impacted you in a great way.

Question number three is pretty long. John 15 says that as a child of God you are in Christ God's friend chosen by him sent by him on mission to bear fruit and that he will answer you and provide for you as you press into this calling.

How would your life look different if you more fully embrace this reality about your identity in Christ? About your identity in Christ.

[47 : 03] And the fourth question is the most important question I think and I encourage each one of us to really think about this one and answering it and act upon it.

what person or group of people in our church has been hard for you to love and what will you do this week to show the love of Christ to them?

And I would encourage you that it probably would be healthy if you didn't say you know what Pastor Mike's question you're that person that's hard for me to love and so here's a gift card to Sonic or something like that probably not the best way to handle that you know what I'm saying but in all seriousness it can be hard to be a part of God's family but it's great to be a part of God's family and we must love one another our Lord demands it and he expects it and there's too much at stake that can be lost if we don't let's pray heavenly father thank you for your word Lord we thank you for truth in this world that has fallen we are surrounded by so many half truths and so many errors so many things Lord that tempt us to exchange your truth for a lie God we're thankful to be able to come to your word and just have it so clearly told to us what it is that you expect of those whom you have saved and

God it's clear that for those whom you have loved you demand that they love those who are part of your church your body God forgive!

us that so often we we draw up enemy lines within your church we create divisions over so many things that are just silly and stupid God forgive us that we tend to see one another not as brothers and sisters but as adversaries that too often Lord when we hurt one another instead of seeking reconciliation we we seek revenge God I pray that for all of us who have heard your word this morning that we would be convicted by your spirit and we would be encouraged to change Lord I thank you for the loving relationships that do exist in this church God I pray that we would just love each other more and more and as your word says try to outdo one another in serving you by loving one another in great ways that would cause the world to look at what's going on here see that there is a difference and know that the difference is

[50 : 03] Jesus Christ God we pray that you would open our eyes to see those who in our church are hard for us to love and give us opportunity this week to show how much we love them as we put those foolish things aside to seek to be the kind of church that you command us to be in Jesus name we!

Amen Thank you.