

Final Words Part 3 - Love One Another 04.03.11

John 13:34-35; 15:12-17 ESV

Video: "Connect - As I Have Loved You" by The Work of the People [2:28]

Introduction: We're examining the last instructions of Jesus to his disciples (and to us) in these last weeks leading to Easter. "Many Rooms." "Abide in Me." And today: "Love one another."

Read: John 13:34-35 ESV

How is "Love One Another" a NEW Commandment? The center of the Old Testament was in the love for God and the love for people. Jesus himself, when quizzed about the "greatest" commandment said:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."
Luke 10:27 (and Matt. 22:37, Mk. 13:30)

To love one another has always been the core of the faith of God's people. So what did Jesus mean by new? We must look at the rest of the commandment: "Just as I have loved you!" This love is a divine love. It transcends the golden rule. It goes beyond asking how would I like to be loved and loving someone in that same way. Rather it asked the question, "How would Jesus love?" Then we do it that way.

We must examine this new commandment in context. Jesus had just told them that he was leaving. Where he was going they could not come. THEN he says "Love one another as I have loved you." IOW, I'm not going to be here in my bodily presence any longer. Yes, I will send the Holy Spirit to be with you. However the bodily, physical, touching, breathing kind of love you have experienced with me these last 3 years? Now YOU do it. YOU BE JESUS to one another. YOU express the divine love to one another. You do it like I do it. This... is new.

And - in our own strength - without supernatural HS - impossible!

"New" Commandment "Love One Another" Sandwiched Between

BETRAYAL and **DENIAL**
"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another."
John 13:34a ESV

Consider the even broader context of this conversation. Jesus had just demonstrated servant-leadership by washing his disciples' feet. That includes the feet of Judas, who *had already betrayed Jesus!* He instituted the Lord's Supper and gave the bread of his broken body and as he dips the bread into the oil *Judas' hand is also there!* Could there be a greater hurt or a greater pain? Could there be anything more divine than loving someone who has sold your fate for 30 pieces of silver? Sandwiched under this top slice of betrayal is the NEW command to love one another as I have loved you.

The *very next thing to happen* is Peter's prideful declaration that he will lay down his very own life for his Lord. And Jesus knows. He knows that before the rooster has crowed that this strong, stubborn, thick-headed future leader of the church *will actually deny even knowing Jesus 3x!*

This is the “new” love. A love born not out of a parent’s love for his own flesh and blood. A love born not out of religious duty to obey the commandments. A love not even born out of the golden rule of good intentions. But a love born out of God *born into us!* A love for one another that is so awesome, so incredible, so beyond-the-natural, so divine that the conclusion of anyone watching would be that a miracle has occurred here. *And that’s why Jesus says:*

Loving One Another is Our **PROOF OF PURCHASE**.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35 ESV

Illustration: When I was kid my brother and I would get into fights about the cereal box prizes. Before the Federal Trade Commission banned the practice of advertising cereal based on the prizes available, Todd and I would watch our Saturday morning cartoons strategizing on what cereals we would buy and how we could beat our brother to the punch. Some of the best prizes involved cutting off the box-top of several cereal boxes as a “proof of purchase.” That, along with money to cover shipping and handling, provided a prize mailed back to us by the slowest means possible. Why the box tops? Because the whole idea from the cereal manufacturers point of view was for us to buy the cereal and to be able to PROVE that we really had done it. Jesus says that our PROOF OF PURCHASE - proof that He really died for us, rose again and lives in us, is the PROOF OF OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

Our love - not our **DOCTRINE** - is how others will know!

It’s important that we stop to note what Jesus did NOT say. No where in these final words passages is the instruction that we must believe the right things. And that we must only hang out with people who also believe the right things like we do. Don’t get me wrong. Doctrine is important. We must be careful to teach God’s word in the right way. Doctrine, however, pales in comparison to Loving One Another *as Jesus loved us!* It’s possible you can believe the right things, teach the right things... and still not love as Jesus loved. The only way, however, to love as Jesus loves, is to have Jesus’ Spirit and Power working in our lives.

The High Standard of Our Love To One Another: **JESUS**!

“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another... This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”
John 13:34b, 15:12 ESV

This is really the whole theme of these final words. **Read John 13:34, 15:12.** Even Jesus final prayer for his disciples includes this request: *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* - John 17:21.

Why is this “Proof” So Powerful? It’s not that you and I, once we become Christ-followers, are particularly *more lovable*. We’d love to think of ourselves that we have become more considerate, more loving, more understanding, more patient... and of course all of these are things that SHOULD happen. You and I know very well that this isn’t always the case.

And so does the world around us! They look at someone maybe in their own family who they know to be flakey, stubborn, hard-hearted... someone who is tough to love... but for some unknown, not understandable, almost miraculous way, they are loved in the church.

This is really the sign of a REAL church... and one of the things that so excites me about Church Requel. The church is not a club. The church is not a social network. We don't filter the kinds of people who come into the church as the same kind of people who we would normally hang out with. The attraction to church is not us... it's Christ. The people who are attracted to Christ are the people who have the need for Christ. These are often the broken-hearted, the hard to love, the people with a tattered history, the folks who aren't listed in "who's who." Sure, there are churches like that. And if we are honest, everyone has a need for Christ no matter how well off or together their life seems to be. When Jesus walked this earth, however, the folks who flaunted their religious pedigrees were rarely the kind of folks who followed Jesus. And in fact many of them were shocked and dismayed by the kinds of people whom Jesus attracted. **AND NOW WE GET TO BE JESUS!** We get to be JESUS to our world and attract the misfits, the ill, the troubled, the fallen, the hurting, the second- and third- and twentieth-chance people! What does this love look like?

Six Credentials of Our Love for One Another

Those who are profession take continuing ed courses, self-test to be able to hold out their credential. Jesus also gives credentials of love:

Credential #1: **SACRIFICE**

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13 ESV

Sacrifice means putting aside my life for your life, my needs for yours, my wants for yours. Jesus' example on the cross is the ultimate. However, we can *lay down our lives* without dying on a cross. In fact it's when we lay down our life every day and in every way to think of my brother or sister's life before my own that I begin to bring Heaven to Earth. BTW - this is also the real definition of humility - not just the elimination of my own life but seeing my life not as the center of everything. Rather seeing Christ as the center with both your life and mine revolving around Him!

Credential #2: **FRIENDSHIP**

"You are my friends if you do what I command you." John 15:14 ESV

This may be the most incredible thing about this... that Jesus tells them and us that it's not just a matter of Lordship and serving, which is what rightfully it should be. Rather it's a matter of friendship. He is our friend. What does this say to our attitude that we may LOVE someone without really LIKING them. Loving one another requires that we find a way to be friends as well.

Credential #3: **TRANSPARENCY**

"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." John 15:15 ESV

Real love does not HIDE behind pretense. There is no such thing as love on the outside but dislike, disdain on the inside. Also love sometimes requires hard conversations. Not everything that the Father made known to Jesus were things the disciples wanted to hear. But love demands transparency. Loving words said for the purpose of encouragement... reconciliation... edification of others.

Credential #4: **CHRIST CHOSEN**

“You did not choose me, but I chose you.” John 15:16a ESV

We cannot escape that being a Christ-follower is not a matter so much of our choice but of His. And while this may be something we grasp rather quickly when it comes to our own salvation, we often forget this when it comes to loving others within the church. Remember that Christ chose that other person too... the person you struggle to love yourself is the person that Jesus loved so much that he gave his own life. How can you NOT LOVE someone HE loves?

Credential #5: **KINGDOM ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

“I...appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.” John 15:16b ESV

This love has an end point, an objective, a result. We bear fruit. We accomplish things together as a result of this love that we could not accomplish in isolation without love. Our love for one another and for those even outside our walls results in things like giving 100 meals to the poor at Easter time.

Credential #6: **PRAYER TOGETHER**

*“...so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”
John 15:16c ESV*

Finally our prayers lives TOGETHER become the final evidence of this love for one another. Have you ever tried to pray out loud in the presence of someone else WITHOUT loving them? Without thinking of them and their needs and their feelings and their struggles? Praying - asking the Father - IN JESUS NAME - means thinking, loving, caring for someone else in a divine way, the way Jesus would do it. It is not an easy thing to do, requires work on our part, and is a credential of authentic Christianity.

Conclusion: We are taking communion together each week during Lent. How appropriate that this evening as we take the bread and the cup together that we think back to that first Lord's Supper? Think about the betrayer in the midst of Jesus. Think about the denier in the midst of Jesus. Now think about those around you. Anyone here who has rubbed you the wrong way? Who you just honestly don't like? Who you love because you're supposed to? OF COURSE THERE IS! And that's just as it should be. Let's admit that this kind of love that Jesus had is something above us... something impossible for us... something that can only happen because of the Spirit's life in ours. As you prepare for communion, ask God for His help. Commit to His love. Admit your own inability. And remember his command to love one another.