

Love & Obedience

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[0 : 00] Well, as we come to the Word of God this morning, we're continuing on in the Gospel of John. For those of you who haven't been here, we've been working through this account of the story of Jesus.

And it's been a few years, I think, now. We're still working our way through. Today we're going to pick up the pace just a little bit, and we're going to hear Jesus touch on a number of things. We're in John 14, verse 15. John 14, verse 15. This is the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest. And He's kind of having this last conversation with His disciples and giving them comfort and encouragement. This is what He says to them. If you love Me, keep My commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you. And to be with you forever. The Spirit of Truth.

[1 : 00] The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore. But you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day, you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.

Whoever has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The one who loves Me will be loved by My Father.

And I too will love them and show Myself to them. Then Judas, not Judas Iscariot, said, But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?

[2 : 05] Jesus replied, Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

Anyone who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own. They belong to the Father who sent Me.

Well, there's a lot of things in this section of the conversation that Jesus has with the disciples that night. I counted at least eight. There could be more.

We'll just run over them really fast. First of all, Jesus urges His disciples to keep His commands. Second, He talks about the Spirit of Truth who is coming.

Third, He talks more about His leaving and returning and gives assurance that He's coming back.

Four, He talks about how the disciples will live because Jesus lives.

[3 : 15] Five, He talks about a moment of clear understanding. There's going to be this moment in which the disciples realize that Jesus is indeed in the Father.

And along with that, a moment in which they understand that Jesus is in them, and they are in Him. Seven, Jesus talks about how He and God will love the disciples and come to them and live with them.

And then finally, Jesus reminds them that the words that He is speaking to them are not His own, but that they are the words of God, the Father Himself, the One who sent Him.

So, lots in here. Eight things. All of them are important. All of them are worth taking time to reflect on, but we couldn't possibly fully linger over each one this morning.

So, we're just going to focus on the one that seems to hold them all together, number three. And then we'll look at the one that Jesus emphasizes the most on this evening with His disciples.

[4 : 26] So, Jesus talks some more about His leaving and His returning. And He gives assurance to His disciples that He is coming back for them. This is something that we heard a little bit about already.

It's how the chapter started. If you were here, the disciples are worried. They're anxious. Why? Well, Jesus has just told them that He's about to leave them.

And where He's going, He says, You can't come with me. Once again, imagine yourself in the room with the disciples as Jesus says this to you.

Jesus has done many wonderful things over the past three years. But He has also stirred up a hornet's nest of opposition.

And things are about to get ugly and violent. So, we imagine for the disciples that this is not what they want to hear. You're leaving us? You're going away?

[5 : 27] Like, all by ourselves? What are we going to do? Well, what Jesus says here in verse 18 is powerful. He says, I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. Jesus speaks to the fear in their hearts. What are they worried about? They're worried that Jesus is about to abandon them.

They're worried that they're going to have to find their way on their own, all by themselves, like a child that has been left by His parents. And Jesus says, Listen, I'm not about to do that to you.

No way. I'm not just going to abandon you like that. I will not leave you as orphans. No. No. I will come to you.

I am coming back. And in the meantime, it will seem to the world as if I'm gone. The world won't see me anymore.

[6 : 31] But you will see me. In the meantime, while I'm gone, I will ask my Father, and He will give you the Spirit of Truth. And He will be with you.

He will be like I have been to you. He will be a counselor. He will guide you. He will lead you. He will help you. He will be with you.

And Jesus says, He will be in you. To stay. In my absence, He will be there. And when that day comes, you will know, you will realize that I have not abandoned you.

No. You will see me. Though the world does not see me, you will. And you will realize that even though I'm apart from you in body, I am with you.

And I am in you by my Spirit. And you are in me. These are awesome words of comfort and encouragement. You know, sometimes it's hard when we look out at the world.

[7 : 39] What do we see? We see like the world sees. We see the absence of Jesus. We see things going on.

And it's not like the story that we read about when Jesus was here. And sometimes doubt creeps in. And we wonder, will things ever be like they were when He was here again?

It's been so long since Jesus walked the earth shoulder to shoulder with us. Where is He? When is He going to come back? When will you show yourself to the world?

As Judas asked. We may even wrestle with deeper doubts. What if He never really came at all? Or what if all this that I've believed, what if it's just some elaborate hoax or a conspiracy theory?

It's here in this place of doubt and even despair that Jesus' words just shine like a glorious ray of light into the darkness. I will not leave you as orphans.

[8 : 55] I will come to you. I'm coming back. There will be a day when we will no longer see the absence of Jesus.

A day when Jesus returns in personal flesh, bodily, and everything that we've had to believe, everything that we have accepted by faith, will be plain and undeniable before every eye in the world.

His return will be visible to every eye. But for now, like the disciples, we must walk by faith.

We must see Jesus with eyes of faith while the world does not see Him. We must learn to accept this guidance of this other counselor, the Spirit of Truth, an invisible, intangible Spirit that the world can't see or know or detect.

But Jesus says He will be in you. He will be in you and I will be in you, says Jesus. These are awesome words of comfort, not just for the disciples in their days of doubt and darkness, but for us as well.

[10 : 15] And in the midst of these words, Jesus says one thing three times. Verse 15, If you love me, you will keep my commands.

Verse 21, Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And verse 23, Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching or literally will keep my word.

This must be important. I mean, Jesus says it three times. I mean, think about this. You're going away on a trip and you're leaving the care of your house to somebody else and you're doing the walkthrough before you go.

You're giving them the instructions and that one thing that is the most important, that if they do nothing else, you tell them about it at the beginning. You tell them about it in the middle as you're giving your instructions and you remind them about it one more time at the end.

This is so important. Don't miss this. Well, Jesus does the same sort of thing here. Three times he tells them, If you love me, you will keep my commands or something very similar.

[11 : 32] So these are words that we can't just hurry past. We got to sit and reflect for a few minutes on what Jesus is saying. If you love me, you will keep my commands.

Let's start by talking about that word commands. Let's maybe see a show of hands. Is there anybody here that loves to be commanded to do things?

Nobody? Well, the Apostle Paul seemed to suggest in his letter to the church at Rome that there's a reason for that.

All of us have sin in us. We're born with sin and because of that we just have this tendency to rebel. From birth, our natural bent is that when we're commanded to do something, we grumble about it, we complain about it, and we even rebel against it.

We don't like being told what to do. We want to do what we want to do. And so this word command, I don't know about you, but maybe it sets you on edge a little bit.

[12 : 47] And then it kind of strikes us oddly, doesn't it, that in the same breath as Jesus speaks about commanding us, he speaks about love.

Like what? How can these two things be together? What a strange thing. We don't love being commanded and we don't like to mix love and duty.

Friendship and obligation or expectations. And so these words of Jesus, they just have a way of jumbling up our emotions even as we come to them, even as we hear them we got to get past that though if we really want to consider what Jesus is saying.

This word commands, it makes us think about the kind of relationship that Jesus has with the men around the table. Theirs is the kind of relationship where Jesus commands them to do things, not suggests, not encourages, not instructs them, he commands them to do things.

So I mean like what kind of relationship is this between Jesus and his disciples? Well, it's not just a friendship, there's not commanding in friendships. I mean they have a friendship. It's not just camaraderie, they have that too.

[14 : 17] It's not just coworkers, they've been working on all kinds of things together. It's not that Jesus is their employer. They're not getting paid a cent to do any of this.

They're following Jesus around of their own free will. And Jesus is not their military officer or their commander. This is not an army. So who is Jesus that he commands them and they must obey? Well, there's more than one right answer to that question, but I'm only going to highlight one. who is Jesus? He is their king. He's the Messiah.

Messiah, Christ. It means anointed one. It points us back to the prophet Samuel who God sent to pour oil on the head of King David to show that yes, this is my chosen king who will rule over my people Israel.

and kings command. They give orders. They have authority. And it's funny, you know, Jesus, I mean, he doesn't in any way minimize the fact that he has this kind of authority over them.

[15 : 38] He just speaks as if it's normal. If you love me, you will keep my commands. I've given you commands, not suggestions, not encouragements, not instructions that are optional commands.

Jesus commands his followers, the disciples, by extension, us, but he has the right to. He's the Messiah.

He's the king of Israel and for all God's people. So he has authority. And as I was thinking about this, you know, we really need to let this word commands work on us.

Yes, Jesus gives his followers orders, commands to do things, to not do things.

And it's not because he's domineering or controlling. He has every right to command us just because of who he is. He's here to give us God's commands for us.

[16 : 51] He serves God as our king. And this should really change the way that we think about all that Jesus said and taught. If you're a follower of Jesus, if you believe in his name, if you believe that he is the Messiah, just like the men around the table, the disciples, you too are obligated to obey his commands.

He is the king. That's the kind of relationship Jesus has with his followers. He gives commands and we are to obey them.

But now let's consider where love enters into this. Three times Jesus makes it clear that love is somehow a part of this. In verse 15 he says, if you love me, you will keep my commands.

In verse 21, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. In verse 23, again, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.

What does love have to do with obedience to a commanding king? well, first, Jesus says that our love for him should be the basis of our obedience.

[18 : 17] It's the foundation for our obedience to his commands. If you love me, you will do this. You will do the things I have commanded.

Now, this might be hard for us to accept or it might, in some of our hearts, it might just rub us the wrong way. Maybe your mind goes to some unhealthy relationship that you've been a part of or that you've seen.

Maybe you think of somebody who's tried to manipulate you or who's tried to coerce you into doing something that you didn't want to do and maybe said something similar to this.

If you love me, you'll do what I say. Perhaps the first thing we need to do here is to remember that Jesus is not like the manipulators that we have known and seen.

He is the perfect son of God. He has come to command us to do the things that God commands us to do and wants us to do.

[19 : 21] And God has the right. He has that place. I mean, he's God. He made us. We belong to him. Not only that, but he's good.

He's glorious. He's worthy of not just our praise and our worship, but also our obedience. And then the Bible goes even further and tells us that the way that God loves us is such that he gives us commands not just because he can or wants to, but for our benefit, for our good, because that is what leads to the happy, the joyful, the prosperous life that he wants us to have.

So no, Jesus is not trying to manipulate or coerce us into some kind of sick or twisted subservience.

Rather, Jesus is showing us what a good and healthy relationship looks like between king and citizens of the kingdom, between God and his people.

It looks like this. we obey his commands and we do it because we love him. Our obedience flows out of our love for the king.

The best picture I can think of this, I hope that you guys have seen or read this, but maybe you've watched the Lord of the Rings, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, or read the book.

[20 : 55] There's a vile and self-interested steward in that story, a steward of the kingdom of Gondor. And everything about the way he governs just makes you feel sick.

It's all about him. That's all he cares about. But then there is Aragorn, the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor. And everything about him is noble.

He's humble. He's gentle. He's kind. He's wise. He's courageous. He brings out the best in others. He leads through love and service. Wherever Aragorn goes in the story, he helps the afflicted. He protects the weak.

He puts his life on the line for others. And he does all this without a throne before he even becomes king. And so all throughout the story, we kind of watch as all the good characters in the story become increasingly more and more happy to pledge their allegiance to this man, to this king.

[22 : 06] They want him to be king because of how good he is. It's an honor to serve him, to be commanded by him. He is worthy of the throne. He's the kind of leader and authority that we want, that we need.

And it's under his governance and command that we will all flourish and prosper and have the freedom that we long for and be protected from the enemy. It's a great picture of how it is with Jesus.

Our obedience should flow out of our love for him. We obey his commands because we love him, because he is that kind of good king that we want and need.

Everything about him is wonderful. He's good. He's gracious. He's humble. He's kind. He's wise. Courageous.

He laid down his life for us. It's an honor to serve the king, to be commanded by this king. Well, now is the place where we should really pause and think about our love for Jesus.

[23 : 17] Jesus says, if you love me, an if statement, it kind of forces us to that question. Do I love Jesus?

Do you love Jesus? And as we reflect on that, maybe we're thinking, well, what does that even mean?

What does it mean to love Jesus? What kind of love are we talking about here? Maybe like just the feeling? How does that work?

If you feel love towards me, you will obey my commands? I don't think that really fits. Love is a feeling, but as most of us have learned by now, feelings are pretty fickle.

They come and they go. They're affected by all sorts of things, by how much sleep we got last night, or by when the last time we ate was, or by what the weather looks like outside.

[24 : 27] It's wonderful when we feel love towards someone or something. We want to feel that all the time towards Jesus, towards the members of our family, right?

But I think we all know that really loving a person, it's more than just a feeling. It has to do with how we treat them, sometimes despite how we feel towards them.

love. This gets to that other side of love, that deeper element to love. It has to do with our care and concern for others.

It has to do with how we treat them, not just how we feel about them. And family relationships are the place where we get lots of opportunity to see love in action.

here we see that commitment side of love, that loyalty side of love, that I'm going to be there and care for you and support you in sickness and in health, for better or for worse.

[25 : 40] Love is not just a feeling. There are times when love is a choice. it's in action. It's that deeper attitude towards others. So now, take this deeper truth about love and hear these words of Jesus again.

If you love me, you will keep my commands. Jesus is not promising that obeying him will always feel easy or that we'll always like to do it or love to do it.

In fact, there are many times when we must just simply choose. to obey, to do the thing Jesus has commanded because we love him despite how we're feeling.

I was reading through the Psalms this week and here's a prayer of David in Psalm 141 verse 4. He prays to God and says, do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil so that I take part in wicked deeds along with those who are evildoers.

Now, why would you pray a prayer like that? Why would you ask something like that unless you feel that pull in your heart towards the things that are evil?

[26 : 58] There are times when we must choose to obey Jesus, to do what he commanded because we love him even though we don't feel like it. Let's look down a little bit to verse 21.

Jesus says there, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. It's said maybe a little bit differently.

Literally, the one having my commands and keeping them, that one is the one who loves me.

another truth emerges here. Obedience to Jesus' commands is the mark of the person who truly loves Jesus.

There is a visible and obvious indicator of whether a person really loves Jesus. Do they keep the commands of Jesus? Now we're being asked a different question.

Not do I love, but am I actually obeying the commands that Jesus gave? We look down to verse 23 now.

[28 : 23] This is the last time he says it. Whoever has my commands and keeps them. No, sorry, there it is. Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching, literally, will keep my word.

My father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. This is a wonderful promise. There is and there will be more to this relationship than just our loving Jesus and our obeying his commands.

love will flow both ways. Our love flows to Jesus as we obey him and it flows from the father, from God to us as we obey him.

My father will love the person who loves me and keeps my word. This is perhaps a special love. I mean, it seems that God has loved everyone even just by sending Jesus in the first place.

But there is perhaps a love upon that love for those who love his son and keep his word. My father will love that person, says Jesus.

[29 : 41] And then this sweet promise which follows, and we will come to him. We will come to that person. not just I will come to him, but we, father and son, we will come to him.

This will no longer be what seems like a long distance relationship. Jesus says we will come to him and we will make our home with him. That's what this is all about.

It's about a relationship between God and us. maybe you remember back to earlier in the chapter. In my father's house, there are many rooms.

Same word here. Many dwelling spaces, many abodes. That's what he's saying here. We will come to him, we will make our home, our dwelling with him.

That's the promise. a good king and his people together. A good God and his people together, living together forever. That's the trajectory here.

[31 : 01] But just like the disciples, for now, we live in the meantime. Jesus hasn't come back yet, and this is how God wants us to live. in anticipation of the return of the king, if you love me, you will keep my commands.

That's the end of my sermon this morning, but now it's your turn to preach to me. I mean, we couldn't go through this whole message and really get a lot of benefit out of it if we didn't even talk about what the commands of Jesus are, right?

It's not enough to just have a general change of heart or attitude towards the commands of Jesus. We actually have to do them. We have to obey them. So what are they? So I'm going to turn the sermon over to you guys for a little bit here.

What are the commands of Jesus to his followers? Love one another. Make disciples of all nations. preach the gospel, the good news. Don't be shy. Shut them out. There's lots of them. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

[32 : 22] Treat them. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength above all things.

What else? Pray. Yeah. What else?

Obey his commands. Yep. That's one of them. To love truth. Remain in me or abide in me.

Yes. Stay connected to me. forgive. Forgive. Yes. Forgive. That's a tough one. What else?

Love your enemies. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Yeah.

[33 : 28] acknowledge there is no God except Jesus. Okay. Yeah. Acknowledge Jesus. Do not be anxious about anything.

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or what you will wear. fear not.

Fear not. Yeah. Yes.

Take up your cross and follow me, said Jesus. Repent. Turn away from your sins. Yes.

Trust. Yeah. Believe in God. Believe also in me, said Jesus. Okay.

[34 : 36] Yeah. Present your body as a living sacrifice. This is a great sample that you've given of the commands of Jesus.

It's so important that we know what they are because how can we do them if we don't know what they are. This is the kind of life that Jesus is calling us to. And it's not that we'll do it perfectly.

He knows that. Jesus died so that we could be forgiven for all of our falling short of that. But this is what he has called us to do, how he's called us to live.

All of these things and the ones that we didn't even get to yet, these are the commands of Jesus and Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commands.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for your word. Thank you for the truth that you bring to us.

[35 : 35] I pray and ask Lord that you would help us as we seek to live in obedience to Jesus.

Lord, we confess right now it's not easy and there's so many times that we want to do other things.

We want to do some of the things you told us not to do or we want to just shirk off the things that you called us to do. And so we pray and ask like David did that you would not allow our hearts to go there, to be drawn to those things.

We ask that you would enable us, that you would fill us with a holy desire to serve you remind us every day of just the awesome and wonderful king that you are, of your great love for us, and lead us in obedience, lead us in doing all those works that you prepared in advance for us to do, for the blessing and building up of each other, our families, and for the people here in Davidson.

We ask this for the glory of Christ. Amen.