

Greater Love has No-one than This (Communion)

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Date: 26 January 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Remember the Lord's death as we prepare and are already preparing through the Word of God and as we anticipate through the sacrament, as you see there, the sacraments, the bread and the wine, as we prepare to remember the Lord's death through word and sacrament, through that which tells us, shows us the body that was broken for us, the blood that was shed for us.

Ask yourself this, what do you see? What do you see in the Word that we've read? What do you see in, well, I don't know what's covered, but what do you see in the cup before you and the bread?

I pray that you see love. In fact, the love of the Lord Jesus. That all that we've heard in the Word, all that we see in the bread and the wine, speaks surely of the love of our Saviour.

And, you know, we live in a world, we live in a society that so cheapens the word love and so cheapens all the emotions of love and even the practice of love. But in the Word of God and in the sacrament before us, we see fully and truly the greatest love of all.

We see the love that no other love can even begin to match. And it is the love that is the greatest of all.

[1 : 2 7] Greater love has no one than this, says Jesus. And, you know, before we even start to think about the love of the Lord Jesus, that love given for sinners, then we do have to explore what exactly we mean and what exactly we're talking about when we speak of the love, the love of God seen in the love of the Lord Jesus, that love that was shown and is shown to sinners such as ourselves.

What do we mean by love in relation to the love of God seen in Jesus? Well, surely the clue is right before us in the passage.

When we see, again, we'll look at the action in more detail, but you see the love in action, the love of Jesus in laying down his life for his friends, for others. Because when you think of love, love in the context of God's love, God's love seen in the love of Jesus for sinners, that love surely speaks of God giving of himself.

God giving of himself to others and for others. God giving of himself for the blessing and the benefit, the spiritual eternal blessing of others.

That self-giving love of God, that love expressed, we might say, in divine affection. Affection, affection, the affection of God for undeserving sinners.

[2 : 5 3] And that's seen and expressed in the Lord Jesus in giving himself for us. For your sake, for your benefit, for your eternal benefit of salvation.

So, you know, it's who God is. We're told that God is love. And it's who God is and is giving of himself. So that others might receive the blessing of God.

The blessing of life eternal that certainly none of us deserve. So, that love that we've been reading of here. The love that, yes, that the Father has for the Son.

God the Father has for God the Son. That love that's been in all eternity. That love that sent the Lord Jesus from heaven to earth for us, for sinners.

It's that love that Jesus had in his heart when he walked on that road, the very path that sent out for him, that road to Calvary. That love that Jesus had in his heart when he proclaimed salvation for sinners through repentance of sin, giving of our lives to him.

[4 : 07] It's that love that Jesus showed in his willingness to defy Satan when Satan tempted him to try and be diverted from that path of self-giving sacrifice.

It's the love that Jesus had that wouldn't deflect him from that path of suffering for our sake. Jesus had the right to call on his Father to send down twelve legions of angels when Jesus was arrested by his captors.

But no, Jesus didn't insist on his rights because of the love that he has for sinners. Of course, it was the love of Jesus that kept Jesus on that cross.

It wasn't the nails. It wasn't the Roman nails that kept Jesus on the cross. It was his love. Love for sinners. The self-giving love that kept them on the cross.

That cross of shame. That cross of suffering. That's what you see in the bread and the wine. That's what you will see. That's what you see in the word of God. You see before you the love.

[5 : 14] That's the greatest love of all. And, you know, to help us in our preparation to receive the bread and the wine that symbolize, that represent the broken body, the shed blood of Jesus, the bread and the wine that nourish your faith, that strengthen your faith, because you will be spiritually feeding on the Lord Jesus, then let's be reminded and continually reminded of what Jesus has done in giving of himself for sinners.

Focus your heart. Focus your mind. And what we've read here before us of the greatest love of all, it tells us of the love of Jesus, even there on the cross of Calvary, giving of himself for us.

It is the greatest love of all. So we've read there in this farewell speech that Jesus gave, just a very short time before his arrest and trial and crucifixion.

And we mentioned at the start, these words that we read in chapter 15 were in the middle of that discourse, the middle of that address, that farewell address. And so we really do have to see these words in context because Jesus is speaking to his disciples, telling his disciples of what is to happen in his giving of himself.

And he's given these words to comfort his disciples. Yes, what's to happen to Jesus and what will happen after his death and resurrection. So we have to see the words that we've read here in chapter 15 in context.

[6 : 48] And really in that case, we'd have to go way back to the beginning of chapter 13. So remember in John 13, we read of Jesus showing his love for his disciples.

How does he show that love? He washes their feet. The task of the lowest of servants. And that act that Jesus showed in washing his disciples' feet, John tells us or proceeds with a comment.

He says that having, of Jesus having loved his own who are in the world, he loved them to the end. So we're seeing love expressed even at the beginning, even before Jesus gives his final address.

We're seeing love, we might say, as that thread that weaves its way through this passage. That act of love and the words of love that tell us that Jesus, yes, truly is the divine Son of God.

He's the eternal Son of God, the sinless Son of God, the one who came to give of himself, the one who came to serve and giving of himself.

[7 : 58] And it's astonishing as it sounds. In the love that Jesus has spoken of, the love that Jesus has shown, he's asking his disciples to show that love one to another.

The evidence of that love, you see at the end of chapter 13, the evidence of being a disciple, being seen in the love that the follower of Jesus has, one for another.

Jesus says, the new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. And, you know, Jesus continues to comfort his disciples through this farewell discourse.

Because remember, this is given in the context of his crucifixion about to happen. And yes, resurrection, ascension into heaven, when physically he'll be absent from his disciples.

The theme of love, as we said, is seen throughout this address. And you go to chapter 14, and you see there of Jesus promising the Holy Spirit after Jesus departs into heaven.

[9 : 07] And the promise given with these words, whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

Jesus, Jesus has love for his own people. That love that Jesus showed and gave through his coming to give his life.

It's there right before us in that farewell speech. That love, the love of Jesus, that you see right through that address. Jesus. And that thread that continues to the point where Jesus makes this amazing statement about giving his life for his friends.

Now we'll be focusing this whole aspect of being a friend of Jesus in a moment. But before we look at that, you know, before even Jesus mentions that giving of himself for his friends, he tells the disciples about his, that relationship of love that he has with them.

when this we read there in the beginning of chapter 15, when he speaks of the vine analogy. Jesus, the vine, his disciples, his followers, the branches, the branches who remain in Jesus.

[10 : 25] The branches who are nourished by the vine, nourished by Jesus. That the nourishment that gives true life, eternal life. And how's that life lived? How's that life, how's it come about?

It's come about through the love of Jesus. Jesus' love for you. And it's that love of Jesus that, that, you know, it's brought out by John here in all its power and majesty.

As we read there certainly from verse 9 of chapter 15, because something extraordinary has been given, been told by Jesus. Just as the Father has loved the Son, just as the Father, God the Father has loved Jesus, so Jesus loves his disciples.

This is amazing truth. This is wonderful truth. God the Father had loved God the Son from all eternity. There was never a moment when the Father didn't love the Son, or the Son loved the Father.

That Father's love to the Son, just focus on that for a moment. Perfect love. That perfect love within the Trinity. Remember when Jesus was being baptized in the Jordan, remember the Father called out, this is my beloved Son.

[11 : 43] And then Jesus is telling his disciples that that same love, that eternal love, that perfect love, that sinless love, that flawless love, that unconditional love that God the Father has for, that the Father's lavished in the Son.

Son gives to his disciples. Jesus gives to all who are his. And that lavish, that abundant love, that perfect, eternal love, is given to you who follow him.

If you're abiding, remaining in Christ, Christ divine. And so you see how the love of God in Christ is right there before us to dwell on, to focus our hearts and minds on, to give thanks for.

And of course, that love, we've seen supremely on the cross. We're here to remember the Lord's death till he comes.

We're here to give thanks and praise for the act of love that Jesus demonstrated in the cross for sinners for us. Give him the praise, give him the glory for that love.

[12 : 51] Think of what Paul wrote to the Romans in Romans 5 verse 8. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Christ died for us, the expression of that love, the love of God in Christ, that love in action, that giving of Christ, the giving of himself, so that you, so that I, who deserve nothing of that love, are given that love.

And we see it before us in the bread and the wine that point forward to the death of Christ for us. Yes, you'll see in representative form the sacrifice that Jesus gave.

Gave of himself. Remember, it's a sacrifice that was given in love for you, for me, for all for whom Jesus came to to give his life.

But remember also this. Never forget this. The love that we're thinking of, the love of God in Christ and Lord Jesus giving of himself, that love is an ongoing love.

[14 : 02] Yes, we see that love on the cross, that held Jesus on the cross, that Jesus showed and is giving of himself for us. But it's a love that remains with you.

The love of Jesus for sinners, that continual love, that ongoing love. And so, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, so we can again dwell on the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of Jesus for sinners.

You know that love. You know that love and you're being found in Christ as his follower, as his disciple. But I think we need to focus more on what did Jesus actually give in love.

We've spoken of Jesus giving of himself, but how does John put it here that again brings to us the wonder, the amazing love of Jesus that he gave his life.

greater love has no one than this. Someone lays down his life, the life given for all who are his. Jesus laid down his life.

[15 : 14] Go to an earlier part of John's Gospel and we hear exactly the same words when Jesus said, I'm the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

Let's just focus on that expression that Jesus gives about laying down his life. Because we do need to take in the more what it costs Jesus for your salvation when he speaks of laying down his life.

I mean, look at the action, laying down. What does it mean? Well, it surely speaks of voluntarily dying, dying voluntarily, giving of self.

not any kind of forced sacrifice, not any kind of reckless offering of himself, not any kind of being victimized and, you know, being put on the cross. No. The action of Jesus and giving of himself was voluntarily given.

knowingly, knowingly, he knew, Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. It was his own volition. He was fully in control of his life, fully in control of what he was doing when he gave himself for others on that cross.

[16 : 28] And you think what Jesus did voluntarily laying down his life. He knew exactly what he was doing. He was in full knowledge of what he was doing there and giving of himself.

And knowing that, and our knowledge of that laying down of his life, and surely we worship him for his great love. It is the greatest love of all.

He laid down his life. Who laid down his life? The Son of God, the self-existing Son of God, the one in whom is all life, the one who gives life, the one who gives eternal life.

This is Jesus, the one through whom life was created in the beginning, through the Son, life created. This is Jesus, the one who assumed human life when he became man through the overpowering power of the Holy Spirit.

This is Jesus who became man for us, became our representative. This is the one who'd known life eternal and the glory of heaven.

[17 : 44] This is the one who had no beginning, the one who created life. Now he's giving his life. One of whom John would say right at the start of his gospel and that in him was life.

In him was life. The life that was the light of men. Jesus voluntarily gave that life, his life, so that you might have life eternal.

And Jesus knew what he was doing in laying down his life. He knew that he would die. He knew that he would experience the price to be paid for sin.

And what was the price? The price was death. Jesus knew that he'd fulfilled the righteous justice of God and that he'd die for sinners. Jesus knew he was going to take the place of sinners.

He knew he faced the wrath of God for sin. And he went there willingly, lovingly. Truly, surely, the greatest love of all you know, we can go to human experience and we can think of human examples of people laying down their lives for others and yes, we marvel at that courage.

[19 : 01] We marvel at sacrificial love. I'm sure you've all got examples you can give of such self-sacrifice, we might say a sort of protecting love that, you know, one person giving out of his life for another.

It may be a parent for a child or a soldier. for a comrade in arms or it may be a hero like Eric Little who, when he was offered the chance of a prisoner exchange, allowed a pregnant woman to take his place instead of his own and for that a few months later Eric Little died.

He gave his life in a very courageous and heroic action. Or we can speak of those who give their lives for the sake of the gospel. You know, who are willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the witness to the Lord Jesus.

Think of all the Reformation martyrs who died for their faith in the Lord Jesus and yes, wouldn't recant their faith. Just a few days ago, the Nigerian brethren pastor, you may have seen it, videoed by Boko Haram, these wicked men who captured him and that pastor knew he was about to be executed and yet used that opportunity to testify to his faith in the living Lord Jesus.

He was prepared to lay down his life for his Savior. We marvel at these examples of the courage of faith. But surely we marvel the more and rejoice infinitely more in the one who laid down his life on the cross.

[20 : 38] It was the sinless Son of God who didn't insist on his rights to remain there in the bosom of the Father in heaven. The one who made himself nothing.

The one who was born in the likeness of man. The one who took the form of a servant. The one who from Bethlehem to Calvary went on that path, went on that road so that he might take your place in giving of his life.

for you. Someone's written this and it's so powerful. The question, what kind of love is this that gave itself for me?

I am the guilty one yet I go free. What kind of love is this? It's the love of the Lord Jesus. He gave his life in love.

He was prepared to give his life that which was precious to Jesus. He gave his life so that you might be free. Free from the power of sin, free from the power of Satan, free from the power of death itself.

[21 : 49] He gave his life so you might be free to live for him. You say, what kind of love is this? love is the greatest love ever known. And no other faith can even remotely begin to claim any such love.

Whether faith leader, if we might put it like that, can claim to have that life-giving love. All other claims to any kind of religious validity, they fall at that hurdle.

There's none other who is the way the truth and the life. There's none other than the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

So you who will be going to the Lord's table in a few moments' time, we've been reminded, already reminded, in the Word, and we'll be reminded again in the sacrament, reminded that he, the Lord Jesus, gave his life for me.

Be reminded of that when you come to the area set aside to remember his death. He gave his life for me. He gave it to you as his friend.

[23 : 03] And it takes us to a third point, the beloved who are blessed as friends, greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

You know, it's staggering enough to learn and to remember that Jesus laid down his life and did so voluntarily. and you know, it overwhelms us when we realise that that death was faced with love.

And you know, it stings you when you know that it was Jesus, the eternal son of God, that he gave his life in death. For others, for you, for me, who deserve nothing of that blessing, who deserve nothing of the salvation that that death effected.

but that Jesus should lay down his life for those whom he calls friends. That is amazing love. Well, that's what Jesus tells us here.

Here's Jesus announcing this to the disciples. He's in a very short time going to give his life on the cross. And he calls them here in verse 14, he calls them his friends.

[24 : 16] No longer do I call you servants, for the servant doesn't know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends. So, we've read verse 13, laying down his life for his friends, Jesus calls his disciples his friends.

This is amazing love. Friends who do as the Lord Jesus commands. Jesus is going to the cross on behalf of those whom he calls friends.

And you who know the Lord Jesus, Jesus went to the cross for you. And if that's the case, then you are counted as a friend of Jesus.

That is a reality, a staggering reality. I mean, we live in a world where the word friend, again, has somehow been watered down, we might say.

The world of social media friends, it can either be someone you know very well or maybe hardly at all, but certainly not a friend in the sense of doing what others command you to do, as some of the case here, as friend of Jesus, someone who does as Jesus commands.

[25 : 23] But, you know, we live in a world where friendship is becoming so distant almost, you know, in the increase in technology when friends become less and less of real, true, close friends.

And even irrespective of technology and media, friends whom we confide in, friends whom we share, our deepest needs, becoming less and less.

A recent study showed that one in eight adults in the UK actually have no close friends. And that works out seven million people. It's astonishing. But remember, you who are a Christian, you who know the Lord Jesus, you have a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Your closest friend, and really following on from this morning, your closest friend isn't your spouse, isn't a family member. your closest friend isn't another person.

Your closest and true friend is Jesus. And again, just a gasp and amazement. This is the eternal, all-powerful Saviour, that He, Jesus, should choose sinners and call you a friend.

[26 : 36] I mean, in ordinary human existence, how are friendships formed? Friendships are formed on the basis of some kind of mutual interest, some kind of mutual affection. You recognise in another person something that you share, something that connects you both together.

That's how generally, anyway, friendships are formed, true friendships. Generally speaking, there's something likeable in the other person that you like, and you'll form that relationship with that person.

But there's nothing likeable and a sinner. You know, the ugliness of sin in your heart, the offence of sin, well, it's so contrary to the love and the purity of the Lord Jesus.

And yet, Jesus calls those who follow Him, those who do His will, He calls them, He calls you, His friends. I mean, He wants you as a friend.

He wants to share with you His love, He wants to tell you of Himself, He wants to tell you what it means to follow Him, He wants to tell you what it means in following Him and the glory of being in His presence eternally.

[27 : 49] He wants to tell you all that He's done for you and what awaits you in glory. Jesus, when He tells of you who are His as a friend, it speaks of that companionship, that closeness that you have with Him.

and yet we're His friends. Friends who never deserve to be friends of Jesus. We deserve nothing of the blessing that Jesus gives to you as a friend, but you are a friend of Jesus because of His love for you.

And I pray, you know, these are just a few thoughts in this passage, but I pray that they will have helped us, helped all of us, as we, as many of you prepare in your heart to come to the Lord's table to remember His death for you.

And remember, you're coming to the table as a friend of Jesus. You're coming to the table to, or this area set aside, to remember the one who showed such love for you, that you will never be without or outwit the love of Jesus eternally.

So come, come in this area, I say, come with praise and thankfulness in your heart. Thank Him, the one who denied Himself, the one who took up His cross, the one who suffered in Calvary, the one who laid down His life not as a victim, but as a volunteer, because He loved you so much that He was willing to lay down His life for you.

[29 : 29] But if you haven't yet known a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus, where are you standing right now?

Well, I say this with the authority of Scripture, you're standing outside of the friendship of Jesus. And where's that? The loneliest place in the world.

But you know, think on the one who was willing to give His life for you. Think on how much Jesus showed His love for sinners that He was willing to give of Himself that you might have eternal life.

None of us, no one who's coming to the table deserve that friendship. We deserve God's wrath for our sin. But you think on the love of Jesus, that love that gave of Himself, that you might have eternal life.

You think on that, and when you think on that and give your life to Jesus, then you know, you won't be in the loneliest place in the world. You'll be in the safest, the most secure place of all.

[30 : 38] So, as we come to that moment, we've done so many times over the years, we come as the Lord's people, as we are about to take our place, as we're about to receive the Lord's Supper.

And remember that you do so in fellowship one with another. You do so in fellowship with fellow believers, who love one another. We pray, as we've commanded that new commandment the Lord Jesus has given us, to love one another.

Come to the table in fellowship, the fellowship of love one with another. You come above all in that fellowship, the one who calls you as friend, we're better to be in a Lord's Day evening than to be with the Lord's people at the Lord's table, sharing in the Lord's Supper, sharing in that simple meal, sharing in that communion meal, doing what we do in remembrance of Him who loves us.

So come, yes, come with anticipation, come with expectation, come, you know, rejoicing, and be glad in heart that you've been given this opportunity again to remember the Lord's death till He comes.

Do so in thanksgiving and do so with love in your heart to the one who gave of Himself in love for you. Amen.

[32 : 10] Amen. Well, we're going to sing now in Psalm 103 and then we'll proceed with the invitation to the table and then another psalm, Psalm 118 and then the Lord's people coming to the table.

But first of all, Psalm 103, page 135, and we'll sing the first three double stanzas down to verse 11. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart, let me exalt His holy name.

Forget not all His benefits, as praise my soul, in song proclaims. 1 to 11, Psalm 103, to God's praise. Amen.