# Love One Another

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0:00] Well, good morning, church. It's good to see you here. Glad you could join us, those of us who are here in person and those who are on the live stream. And as we begin summer, post-Morail Day, we continue in our series in the book of John.

If you want to turn with me, we're going to start by reading our passage. It's in John chapter 15, starting in verse 12. There are pews in the Bible if you didn't bring one. This is new and glorious. So if you want to turn there with me, I did not get the page number. But you know, before the pandemic, I never knew the page number anyway. So John 15, starting in verse 12, is our text.
This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays 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.
[1:18] 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. Let's pray together. Lord, we, as we gather this morning, we are thankful for your word.
Lord, thank you for these words of Jesus. Lord, spoken to his disciples and yet spoken to us, men and women who follow him centuries later.
Lord, we ask this morning that by your spirit, you would help us to understand and apply these words to our lives. Lord, that we would know you more. And Lord, that we would be people who follow you and represent you as you call us to in this world.
Lord, I ask for your help this morning, that I might speak the words you want me to speak for the good of all of us, and that your word would do its work in each of our hearts.
[2:26] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Love one another. It's pretty clear. Anyone who does basic Bible study, it's verse 12, it's verse 17.

This is the big idea of our passage, is that Jesus is telling us to love one another. This is in the context of his farewell discourse. This is the last week of his life.
This is probably the last night of his life. He's speaking to his disciples, reminding them and teaching them about how they're going to continue to live as followers of him after he goes away, after he goes to the cross and the resurrection.
And so he's instructing them on what it looks like to live. And he gives them this command, love one another. And it's not new. We actually saw it just a few weeks ago. So, Jesus said this at the end of chapter 13 after he washed his disciples' feet.
He said, So also you should love one another the way I have. So this is not a new thing, but he comes back to it here in this. And remember that this is coming right on the heels of what we saw last week.
[3:32] That as Jesus calls us into this mission to represent him in this world, he calls us to do so in a humble dependence on him. This is what abiding means, to stay connected, vitally connected to Jesus as we go about this passage, or as we go about this calling and this mission that Jesus has given us.

So this is the context then that Jesus turns and he says, As you abide in me, then live a life of love. And I want to ask three questions of our text this morning.
And we'll get through this hopefully in some good times so we don't all melt. First, the question is, why do we need to be told this? The second question is, what does it actually look like?

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And three, what is its purpose in the world? So let's look at each of those questions. Why do we need to be told this? Well, friends, it's pretty simple. It's because we're selfish.
By nature, we are selfish people who think of ourselves 95% of the time. There are lots of reasons why it's easy for me to not love people, right?
[4:44] Sometimes I'm busy. And so I find my agenda, my priorities, and my work is far more important than anyone else around me. Sometimes I find it hard for me to love because I'm disappointed.

My self-protection kicks in. I don't want to love you because it might hurt or be difficult or cost me something that I don't want to give.
Now, I need to say this clearly. There is a place for proper boundaries. There is a place for avoiding abuse. But a loving heart is one that overcomes a selfish desire to protect in an unhealthy way.
I also find that it's hard for me to love when I'm weary. Get home at the end of the day, and I'm tired, and I just want to do my thing. I want to sit on my couch.
I want to drink my iced tea. I want to look at my phone, and I want to ignore everyone else around me. I also find that it's hard for me to love when I am proud.
[5:50] When I am full of myself, when I have ambitions and goals, when I think that I'm the most important person in the room, I think about myself all the time and not anyone else.

So I think that maybe some of you are a little bit like me in this way. And that we need to be told this because we are fundamentally self-centered creatures.
Stop and think for a minute. What about you? How is this hard for you? Are there circumstances that you can think of where you're finding it hard to love others?
Are there people in your life that you're finding it hard to love? Friends, welcome to the human race. This is the way it's been from the very beginning. After the fall, after sin entered into the world, Adam and Eve and their relationships were marred from the very beginning.
And what were meant to be life-giving relationships became selfish, contentious relationships. Think about Adam and Eve and the curse of chapter 3 or Cain and Abel in chapter 4.
[7:01] You see it and then throughout the whole Bible you see this over and over and over again. That people will think of themselves. We need to be told to love one another because it is in fact not natural to love.

Sometimes we have the ability to do so for a little while. Some of us have a greater capacity to do it naturally for a while. But in fact it is not natural because of sin and the fall in our world.
And so we need to be told this. Jesus is saying, as you are followers of me, I am giving you this new commandment, this new pattern of living.
Well what does it look like? Why is it new? Let's look at the passage now to look at verses 12 through 15 to see what it looks like. Jesus says, this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.
Just think for a minute what we know from the Gospels about Jesus and his interactions with his disciples. Peter, the headstrong one who never gets it right and who in the end will deny him.
[8:13] James and John, the ambitious ones who argue for and aspire to the right hand and the left hand of ruling. Thomas, the doubting one.

Really, Jesus? Jesus, do I really need to trust you? Do I really believe you? And Judas. The one that has already left their center, their group now.
Jesus knowing that he… These are the people that Jesus has loved. And when he says this, they're the people that he's first speaking to. How have I loved you? Patiently.
With long suffering. With kindness. With persistence. Teaching you goodness. Bearing with your misunderstanding. Your selfishness and your pride. This is the kind of love that Jesus calls now his disciples to follow.
And then he goes further in verse 13. He says, what does this look like? Greater love has no one than this, that they lay down their life for their friends.
[9:17] Jesus knew. Jesus knew not only had he loved his disciples well, but he was going to love them well to the very end. And in doing so, he knew that the cross was coming.

In fact, it was imminent. And he was looking ahead, knowing that his love would take them there. Would take him there for them. He would suffer the indignity and the scorn and the shame.
He would suffer the agony of physical torture. He would suffer the judgment of God on their behalf and on ours. A death that he did not deserve.

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And Jesus, looking ahead, says, this is what it looks like to even lay down your life for your friend. Knowing what he would be going to do.
Jesus says, I call you friends because this is what I'm going to do. Then verse 14, and he says, and your friendship will show itself in loving one another.
[10:18] That is, and I want to make sure, I said this last time I preached in John, I'm going to say it again. This is another if statement that isn't a conditional the way we think of it. It's not, if you obey these commands, then I'm going to be your friend.

But if you are my friend, then what will flow from that is you will love one another. It will be the proof, the outworking of what it means to know my friendship, that you will love one another.
Verse 15, he says, and you already are my friends, because I have told you what the Father has told me. I have brought you into the inner circle, the intimate counsel of the Godhead.
I have brought you in, and my Father has told me things that now I have brought you in. No longer do I call you slaves. No longer, and some of this is a salvation historical move.
No longer are we wondering how is God going to work out this salvation and bring us into this new family. But now, because of what Jesus is about to do on the cross, no longer are you an outsider, but you are a friend.
[11:30] You know the mind of God. Because now you are going to see the redemptive work. I have told you that I will go to the cross and die for you. And you are about to see it.

And in this then, you are my friend, who I lay down my life for. Friends, this is what it looked like for Jesus to love his disciples.
And this is what it looked like for Jesus to love us. What does it look like in our life to begin to lay this?
Well, there are sermons upon sermons that I could preach with lots of examples. But here are four things that I see. Jesus' example shows us that love is costly.
It will cost you your time. It will cost you your finances. It will cost you the intangible but very real what we all know.
[12:29] The weight of our heart when we love someone deeply. When we care for them through hard things. Love is costly.

It is also sacrificial. That is, we will give up things in order to love others. We will live up comfort. We will give up comfort. We will give up control to love others.
Love is also selfless. Love does not ask, what do I get in return? It does not ask, have you earned this or do you deserve it? It does not say, I will love you as long as you praise me or thank me.
Love is selfless. And finally, love is available and proactive. It does not wait to be asked. It does not wait to be coerced or manipulated.
It does not wait, but it takes the initiative. It looks and it sees and it understands and it acts for the good of others.
[13:39] Friends, there are lots of great examples of love in this world. I've experienced it myself in this congregation as you have loved me through some hard seasons in the last 10 years.

And I'm thankful for that. One of the most moving examples that I can think of of love is in the life of a guy named Robertson McQuilkin. He was an older evangelical.
Some of you may know him. He was the president of a place called Columbia Bible College and Seminary in South Carolina. Was a prominent evangelical leader. And the prime of his career when his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.
And as she slowly deteriorated in her cognitive functions, she grew in her terror that she had somehow lost him. So he would go off to work and half an hour later she would become afraid and she would walk from their house to work.
And she would do this sometimes four, five, six times a day because of it. Her terror of losing him was so great that it caused her this great suffering.
[14:53] And so he, in the prime of his career, decided to step down. It's a beautiful letter. You can Google it. Robertson McQuilkin. But near the end of the letter, he wrote this.

Duty can be grim and stoic, but for me, I love Muriel. She is a delight to me. Her childlike dependence and confidence in me.
Her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit that I used to relish so. Her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration.

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I don't have to care for her. I get to. It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person. He spent the next ten years of his life caring for his wife.
It was costly. It was sacrificial. It was selfless. And it pictures Christ to me. So how about you all?
[15:57] What does love look like? And you know, there's one other word that I want to bring out in this section, and that is that it's that we are to love one another. Now look, the Bible says lots of things.

We're to love our enemies. We're to love our neighbors. We're to love in lots of different contexts. But here specifically, Jesus says, love one another. And friends, I've been so encouraged by this church, by the love that I have seen between you for one another.
But I wanted to call you and challenge you. Take a new step this summer, this fall. Try reaching out to someone who you wouldn't normally love.
Find someone who's ten years older or ten years younger than you. Find someone who's in a different stage of life than you. Come from a different ethnic background, a different educational background, a different they live in the suburbs or the city, whatever it is.
Find someone who you look at and you think, that person's really different from me. And learn a little bit more about what it means to love the way Jesus loves by reaching out to someone else and developing a relationship with them.
[17:09] You don't have to do it now, today, but over the next couple of weeks, over the next couple of months, let's grow as a church in loving one another.

You will benefit, they will benefit, and God will be glorified as we do this. So if that's what love looks like, Jesus goes on in verse 16 to tell us also that in the context of this love, there is a purpose that he has for us.
And this purpose is that we would bear fruit. Look with me again at verse 16. He says, you did not choose me, but I chose you. Again, Jesus' initiative, his electing love for them.
I chose you to set my love on you. And I chose you with a purpose. A purpose that you would go and bear fruit. Pastor Nick talked last week in this image of the vine and being connected to the vine and fruit bearing, that fruit bearing can mean a lot of things.
It can mean our character and being a more loving person for sure. But here, because it says go and bear fruit, I think that Jesus is particularly talking about the missional sense here, that he's going to send them out into the world as witnesses, and that the fruit that they're going to bear will be the lives of other people, transformed and changed by being brought into a saving relationship with Jesus.
[18:32] The fruit is new believer experiencing the love of God through his people. And through our words as we proclaim him on the mission that God has called us as his people in this world, and through our relationships with one another as we love one another deeply, God intends for that to overflow and to bear fruit.

John 13, a reminder of what he said there. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also are you to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.
D.A. Carson, one of the great commentators on John, says this, the union of love that joins believers with Jesus can never become a comfortable, exclusivistic huddle that only they can share. Because the love that he calls for us to have with one another is meant to be this overflowing fountain of love. This community of brothers and sisters that love one another in such a way that others are attracted and drawn to it.
In 15 years of campus ministry, I saw this over and over and over again. A friend, a roommate, a classmate, a teammate would see the way that the Christians loved one another.
[19:54] And they wouldn't know what it was, but they'd say, whatever that is, I want that. I want in on that because that's so much better than the craziness that I live in otherwise.

And they would be drawn in and they would come to understand that the love that is between believers flows from the love that comes from Christ. And they would come to faith in Christ as they are drawn in by the love that believers have for one another.
Friends, this is what Jesus has called us to. To be this kind of overflowing, this beacon of light, this, I think of it as like a warm campfire that people gather around.
And those in darkness, wandering, looking, see the light. And they feel the warmth of the love of God's people for one another. And they are drawn in to understand Christ better.

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This is what he's called us to. And I'm thankful to be in a church where I can say, I believe this is real. To hear the call that Jesus gives us to continue to do it still more.
[21:07] Now, I want to close by saying this. When you hear this, maybe you feel overwhelmed. You're sitting there thinking, I don't actually love people very well.

Going back to point one, I'm actually really selfish. And I know that. And I don't like that. But I don't know how to change that. I don't know how to be different. I want to remind you what Jesus has already told us.
In chapter 14, he has told us that when he goes away, he will not leave us alone. But he will send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to mediate to us Christ's love so that we may know it and so that we may follow up.
He has also reminded us in verse 15, in the verses right before this, that when we abide in Christ, connected to the vine, Jesus, the fountain of real love in this world, we will bear fruit.
And so we don't have to produce this as much as we have to connect with Jesus, who is the producer of fruit and love in our lives, and to work at it as he works in us so that we can be loving people.
[22:14] And then finally, I want to remind you of the passage that Ophelia read earlier in 1 John. We must remember that here is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us.

Sent his son to be the propitiation, the savior, the one who would lay down his life for us. Later on in that chapter in 1 John 4, he'll say, we love because he first loved us.
And I imagine this is your experience as well. When I know, when I'm convinced in my mind that Jesus loves me, and when I experience it in my heart, and sometimes it's one and sometimes it's the other, it's not always the feeling, it's not always the conviction, but when I know those things are true, when that is in the forefront of my life, and in the center of my experience of a relationship, of this abiding relationship with Christ, then I am freed to love others.
I don't worry about my comfort and ambition and pride because Jesus loves me, and it breaks the stranglehold of those things in my heart. I'm able to see others through the light of Christ's love and see them as people worth loving, even if they're undeserved and unearned, because that's the way I've been loved.
And I'm able to love sacrificially because God has poured out his love in my heart. As we know Christ's love, it is then that we are able to love one another.
[23:52] So friends, this is Christ calling us. To love one another as he has loved us.

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