

Love

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Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

[0 : 00] John 15, verses 9 to 17. So that's John, chapter 15, verse 9 to 17.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now I remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. Just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this, love each other as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business.

Instead, I have called you friends. For everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

[1 : 15] Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command, love each other. So let's just pray. Over the last few weeks, we've thought about faith, hope, and today we consider love.

Hope is the ability to hear the melody of the future. Faith is the courage to dance to it today.

And love binds all things together. Our faith and our hope are bound together by love.

You know, it's very interesting that God teaches us to love by putting some unlovely people around us.

It takes no character to love people who are loving to you. But it takes much character to love those who are unloving to you.

[2 : 38] New Testament. Love is more of a verb than a noun. It is more to do with acting than feeling.

The call to love is not so much a call to a certain state of feeling as it is to a quality of action.

And in each and every one of our lives, we are called to love. Not just to feel love for one another, but to act in a loving way.

Now we notice the first week that we read from Luke's gospel. Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother.

His mother's sister Mary. The wife of Clopas or Cleopas. And Mary of Magdala.

[3 : 45] And it's that Mary who demonstrated love that we want to come and think about this morning. We've thought about faith. We've thought about hope.

Now we want to think about love. That woman who came to Jesus while he was having dinner in the house of Simon.

And there she took an expensive ointment and wiped Jesus' feet. And as she did so, she received a lot of rebuke from Judas Iscariot for doing that.

However, we notice in that incident that Jesus immediately comes to her defense when he says leave her alone.

She had to keep this scent for the day of my burial. And adds, you have the poor with you always. You will not always have me.

[4 : 59] A great act of worship in giving to Christ the most expensive thing she had. And she gave it out of love.

And that Mary had known the misery of being possessed with demons and the joy of being released.

She was a sinner under the power of Satan. She became a trophy of grace. She went on to become an ardent follower of Christ.

Christ. She followed Christ faithfully during his trial. She was found at the tomb, outside the tomb, weeping and hearing her name being spoken when Jesus said, Mary.

What a lovely time that must have been for her. Mary. In her distress, in her anxiety, in that time of wondering where Jesus was, this person, the gardener, whom she thought was a gardener, came and spoke to her and said to her, Mary.

[6 : 34] Oh, that Christ may come to us and speak in that way into our lives. And she followed Christ's instructions and became a messenger to the other disciples.

Go and tell! And she willingly did it. No doubt, the memory of that act thrilled her time and time again.

every day as she followed Jesus, she would recollect and remember what it was that he had done for her. And she continued to minister to demonstrate her love for this great act of forgiveness and healing.

You see, initially, she didn't come to worship the risen Lord. God. She came because she still loved the dear Jesus, whom she had known, who had allowed his love to fill her life.

And what she met that morning outside the tomb was nothing less than love. There are a few, four Greek words which translate love, two in particular in the New Testament, phileo, a type of love that is shared between the best of friends.

[8 : 18] and it is, or at least should be, the type of love that exists between church members.

Eros love, which we can find within that of a marriage. Storge, most people have not heard of that.

but they exhibit it without knowing it. An example would be the natural love and affection between a parent for a child. But only phileo and agape are the two Greek words used in the New Testament.

And agape love love. It's that love which is shown at its ultimate.

It is unconditional. Is your love for your brother or sister in Christ unconditional? is it driven by Christ or driven by your feelings as to how they've behaved or what they've said about you or to you in this past week?

[9 : 50] You see, this love that we have here, this agape love, is the most self-sacrificing love that there is.

It's a kind of love that God has for his own children. That kind of love that was displayed by God in Christ upon the cross, love so amazing, so divine, says the hymn writer, demands my life, my soul, my all.

Agape is something of the understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill for all men.

It's a love that seeks nothing in return and when you rise to the level of this kind of love, you begin to love all men irrespective of what they have done.

Not because they're likable, but because God loves them. It's a highest of all definitions and it's a kind of love that God wants to instill in our lives.

[11 : 17] most kind of people that's okay.

it's okay too, it's nice to have that kind of interjection agape love is that love which is always associated with the love of God and the word agape was hardly ever used in Greek speaking societies but in the New Testament it's used over 300 times and they all have different meanings for example we have verses in scripture where that comes out very clearly 1 John chapter 4 verse 8 anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love

John chapter 10 verse 17 for this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may get up again in John chapter 21 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved agapeo following them the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and said Lord who is it that is going to betray you now the word that Jesus used in his communication with Peter was agapeo but Peter when he he misunderstood what Jesus was saying maybe he was caught off guard yes Lord you know I love you the word he uses there is filio which is brotherly love you see Peter didn't get it

Jesus was using the strongest of all types of love agape for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved for his life by his life to die for an enemy is not what humans do a young married couple were on their own after a wedding and the wife asked her husband darling do you really love me husband whispered to her of course I do I love you so much I give my life for you the wife smiled at her husband and said to him darling you don't have to do that just tell me you'll wash your dishes that'll be quite enough but the God love the agape love

Jesus died for us while we're still sinners agape love is a God love it's a love that was displayed when Jesus laid down his life for his friends for us Jesus poured out that love for sinners and it's beautifully described in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 love is patient and kind love is not jealous it does not brag and is not proud it's not rude not selfish it doesn't get upset with others love doesn't count up the wrongs that have been done love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth love patiently accepts all things it always trusts always hopes and always remains strong and so

[17 : 07] Jesus asks Peter this question do you love me more than these you see Jesus was not asking Peter that morning how much he had wept for what he had done or how often he went on his feet seeking forgiveness but rather do you love me more than these and often we can misunderstand the purpose of a question as Peter did on that occasion in our fellowship here there were a number of couples who have or who will be celebrating their golden wedding let me ask him a question rhetorical of course have you ever misunderstood your partner your wife your husband during those 50 years but if that question was asked to us all have any of us misunderstood what our wife or our husband has said to us during our time together what would you say nothing

I think I think in all honesty we would have to say yes we have misunderstood a wife was soon to celebrate a special birthday and her husband asked her what she would like oh she replied I'd like to be 12 again and so he went about preparing the things that would please her and on the great day the limo arrived arrived threw up at the house and he took her out to a theme park with all the attractions the rollercoaster rides the ghost ride the ice cream and popcorn stall another round of shows candy floss paddle boats cinema and much much more and when they got home she as you can imagine was exhausted she climbed or tried to climb up the stairs to her bedroom and he followed her well how was your day he said she replied when I said I wanted to be 12 again

I'm a dress size not age sometimes we can misunderstand what people are asking what people are wanting and when Jesus asked Peter do you love me more than these Peter misunderstood the question Jesus used the word agape unconditional love as I am showing to you but Peter responds was philio it was a hard question and sometimes he asks us hard questions today in a relationship with him but if we are honest we would prefer easy questions wouldn't we not hard questions picture the scene disciples are sitting around an open fire and Peter no doubt remembering a previous fire that he sat around when he denied his

Lord Peter quite possibly or probably munching away at the fish that he had caught cooked fish and from time to time probably still an eye towards Jesus waiting for the condemnation but the condemnation didn't come Peter's intention as you read that story was to go out fishing back to that place of comfort I'm going fishing guys who's coming with me we'll go with you they said and as they brought their fish necks into the shore that Jesus told them to cast their necks to the other side they were amazed at the great catch of fish and as they brought them in and

Jesus was at the fire and cooked the fish for them then in the conversation he says do you love me do you love me more than these i'll stick by you peter i love you and i care for you i know you're upset by what you did but i love you i remember what you said that you'll stick by me.

[23 : 31] But your actions didn't match your words. You see, Peter was caused to remember that he had lost his stickability.

How about you and me? How have there been times when we've lost that stickability? We've made that promise to God, to Jesus.

Love is a word that can easily roll off our tongues. But love is an action that sometimes is difficult to show.

Have you lost your first love? John, in his letter, Revelation says, but I have this against you.

You've abandoned your first love. What about you and what about me? Have we abandoned our first love? Have we abandoned our first love? Do you think Peter would have looked Jesus in the eye when he gave his response?

[24 : 55] Yes, Lord. You know I love you. Possibly in his unconvincing tone, he was saying something like this.

I don't want to talk about that. What's done is done. He was possibly trying to deflect the question that Jesus asked him.

But Jesus was persistent. And in his persistency, you can possibly sense Peter was hurt by the continual asking of that question.

I don't know if it has anything to do with the fact that he denied Jesus three times, that Jesus asked him three times. I think there's a deeper meaning to that. But this digging for an answer hurt Peter.

Peter. I wonder if there is something in your life or my life that people look at and people say, there's something wrong with you.

[26 : 15] You've not got the stickability. They can see the faults in your life that maybe you can't see.

But God can use you as he used people in Scripture in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Noah was a drunk. Abram was too old. Isaac was a daydreamer. Jacob was a liar.

Jacob was a liar. And Leah was ugly. Moses had a stutter. Gideon was afraid.

Samson had long hair. Anne was a womanizer. Rahab was a prostitute. Timothy and Jeremiah were too young.

[27 : 17] David had an affair. He was a murderer. Elijah was suicidal. And Isaiah preached naked.

I wouldn't advise Emily to do that. But however, I can't stop you. Naomi was a widow. Jonah ran from God.

Jacob was bankrupt. John the Baptist ate bugs. Peter denied Christ. The disciples fell asleep while praying.

Martha worried about everything. Samaritan woman was divorced more than once. Zacchaeus was too short.

and Paul was too religious. And Lazarus was dead. But God raised him and he used him.

[28 : 28] How do you think those people in that society would have reacted when Lazarus walked down his street having been dead? he would have immediately caught attention.

You see, when we come to Peter and think about Peter, yes, he denied his Lord. He was asked questions. Do you love me more than these?

And Jesus wasn't trying to belittle him by asking a hard question or a hurtful question, but rather he was wanting to ask him a helpful question.

Peter's response was this, Lord, you know all things. He got that right. You know how I feel about you. I love you.

But the words didn't tie up. Peter, having been brought to the point of repentance and brokenness, received those words from Jesus, feed my lambs.

[29 : 48] Boy, didn't that hit him between the eyes? I failed you. I've denied you. And you still want to use me?

Yes, was Jesus' response. Feed my sheep and feed my lambs. And Peter went out to achieve that.

For Peter would have never been the Peter of Pentecost if he had never been the Peter of the seashore. Agape love doesn't come naturally because of our fallen nature.

We're incapable of producing such love. If we are to love as God loves, that love can only come from that source.

That's the love that's been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us when we became his children.

[31 : 09] this is how we know that what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Jesus often works to meet us in our place of hiding and shame and bring us into healing and restoration.

What has God been challenging you regarding your faith, your hope, your love?

He's still calling you to follow him. what will your response be? George Liddell, who's a vice-chancellor of Oxford University in the 19th century, wrote these words.

Give me a man of God, one man whose faith is master of his mind and I will right all wrongs and bless the name of all mankind.

[32 : 40] Give me a man of God, one man whose tongue is touched in heaven's fire and I will flame the darkest hearts with high resolve and clean desire.

Give me a man of God, one man, one mighty prophet prophet of the Lord. I will give you peace on earth but with a prayer and not a sword.

Give me a man, one man or woman of God true to the vision of that he sees and I will build your broken shrines and bring the nations to their knees.

peace. And as those words were applicable to the time that he lived in the early 19th century, they are just as applicable today.

We need to see men and women brought to their knees in repentance and God can use you as you deflect questions which Jesus asks you.

[33 : 49] He comes to you time and time again and says you love me more than these. There's a faith, a mental ascent that cannot survive Calvary.

There's hope that can be submerged in disappointment but agape love binds all these together.

Are you willing to be that man or woman of God this morning? God give me a man just one man true to the vision that he sees and I will build your broken shrines and bring the nations to their knees and you know and I know that we need this nation to be brought to his knees.

As we listen to this song being played to us let each one of us make a response to God compelled by love.

It will be shown on the screen and played through the loudspeakers. Let's make this our response this morning.

[35 : 26] in a FROM quantum time and of time to tickle above the screen Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[38 : 44] Thank you. Father, there are times we need to be compelled by that love.

You ask us, each and every one of us, do you love me more than these?
because of that love.

In Jesus' name, amen. We're going to sing just...