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Love One Another

John 15.12-17

Series: Signs of Life

September 26, 2021

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I. Introduction

- A. It is clear that the Bible is filled with reflections on love
 - 1. Love of God
 - 2. Love of others
- B. Wide variety of kinds of love
 - 1. Love of others based on attractive qualities of the object of love
 - a. Isaac's love of Esau – shared a common love of savory game
 - 2. Love of father for a son
 - a. Abraham's love for Isaac which made his offering of Isaac so excruciating
 - 3. Love of a man for a woman
 - a. Jacob's love for Rachel, which led him to serve Laban 14 years to have her as his wife
 - 4. Love of friendship
 - a. David's legendary love for Jonathan
 - b. Leading them to engage a covenant to protect and provide for each other as either had need
 - 5. Romantic love
 - a. Expressed in an entire book of the Bible – Song of Solomon
 - 6. Love of neighbor
 - a. Commanded as far back as Leviticus
 - 7. Love for God
 - a. Commanded even in the context of the 10 Commandments
 - b. Expressed repeatedly by the psalmists
 - c. **Psalm 18:1** (NASB95) — 1 "I love You, O LORD, my strength."
 - d. **Psalm 116:1** (NASB95) — 1 I love the LORD, because He hears My voice and my supplications.
 - 8. Love of God for His people
 - a. **Psalm 47:4** (NASB95) — 4 He chooses our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom He loves.
 - b. **Psalm 87:2** (NASB95) — 2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.
- C. Love in the Gospel of John
 - 1. Also spoken of as the gospel of love
 - 2. God's love for the world
 - a. **John 3:16** (NASB95) — 16 "For God so loved the world, that He

gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

3. The Father’s love for His Son
 - a. **John 3:35** (NASB95) — 35 “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”
 - b. **John 5:20** (NASB95) — 20 “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing...”
4. Jesus’ love for his adopted family
 - a. **John 11:5** (NASB95) — 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
5. Jesus’ special love for a disciple
 - a. **John 13:23** (NASB95) — 23 There was reclining on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.
6. Love of Jesus for His disciples in general
 - a. **John 13:1** (NASB95) — 1 ... having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
7. And more...
- D. Which makes it all the more curious, that in the midst of this final discourse, this final private occasion in which Jesus pours into the lives of His disciples one final time, that He would once again bring up the issue of love
- E. Maybe it’s because love is such a universal human impulse and disposition
 1. That so many of the problems in this desperate world’s dire circumstances are caused, not so much by a lack of love, but by misplaced and misunderstood love
 2. **Psalms 4:2** (NASB95) — 2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what is worthless...
 3. **Psalms 52:3–4** (NASB95) — 3 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. 4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.
 4. **2 Timothy 3:2** (NASB95) — 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money ...
 5. **2 Timothy 3:4** (NASB95) — 4 ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...
- F. All of which leads Jesus to conclude that He couldn’t possibly say enough to His disciples about what constitutes genuine, biblical love
 1. And He launches into yet another course of study on love
- G. **John 15:12–17** (NASB95) —
 1. 12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
 2. 13 “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
 3. 14 “You are My friends if you do what I command you.
 4. 15 “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

5. 16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.
6. 17 “This I command you, that you love one another.”

II. **The Commandment of Love**

- A. The first thing we notice is that this text has bookends
 1. Bookends – they frame the instruction
 - a. They comprise the alpha and the omega of this sermon on love
 2. “This is my commandment, that you love one another...”
 - a. “This I command you, that you love one another...”
 3. The use of bookends essentially encapsulates the instruction
 - a. Indicating that what He is saying is contained within this instruction
- B. And the instruction that frames the message is a command
 1. Not a suggestion
 2. Jean and I were riding in a taxi in Shenyang China with some friends of ours some years ago
 - a. We were riding through an area in which there was a great deal of construction, which was the case in much of China at the time – especially road construction
 - b. The workers had laid down lines dividing the road into lanes just the same as if we were in the states
 - c. But nobody seemed to pay any attention to the lines
 - d. There were cars and jitneys and carts and bikes all over the road, irrespective of the lines and signs
 3. Our friend noticed, I think, our puzzlement
 - a. He said, “You see those lines in the street? Merely suggestions.”
- C. “Love one another” is no suggestion
 1. It’s not the kind of advice you find in one of the magazines you might pick up in the check out line at Publix
 - a. “Five ways to live healthier lives” kind of things
 - b. “Current thinking on how to prepare for family transitions”
 - c. “How to plan most effectively for retirement”
 2. Most of those kinds of advice have limited value
 - a. Are dependent on time and circumstances
 - b. And will be out of fashion just as fast as they came into fashion
 3. No – this is not a suggestion, no “good advice”
 - a. This is a command
 4. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are obligated to love one another
 - a. This is a moral imperative
 - b. And you may not pick and choose your moral imperatives if you are a Christian
 - c. Jesus picks them for you
- D. And He is not waffling on this commandment
 1. It’s not the first time He has issued the command

- a. **John 13:34** (NASB95) — 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
 - 2. And He has even made loving one another the defining mark of being a Christian
 - a. **John 13:35** (NASB95) — 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - 3. The world will make decisions about whether your Christianity is genuine, or is just so much blowing smoke
 - a. Based on whether you love your brothers and sisters in Christ
- E. And so when Jesus bookends this instruction by commanding “love one another”
 - 1. It is clear that very few aspects of the Christian life are more important
- F. Further, He attaches no conditions to which kind of “one another” we are to love
 - 1. Attractive one anothers, but perhaps not unattractive one anothers
 - 2. Well-off and influential one anothers, but maybe not needy or disenfranchised one anothers
 - 3. One anothers who enjoy the same things we enjoy, but not one anothers who share no common interests with us
 - 4. One anothers who have pleasant, engaging personalities, but maybe not those with difficult personalities
 - 5. One anothers who look like us, who have the same cultural, ethnic or racial background we do, but maybe not those who issue from a different stock
 - 6. One anothers who belong to my political party, but we don’t really need to love those other guys, do we?
- G. No – just “one another”
 - 1. Let’s face it – some of us are more difficult to love than others
 - a. Jesus doesn’t care about that
 - b. He loved all kinds of people
 - c. We’re to do the same
- H. And make no mistake, Jesus Himself owns this commandment
 - 1. In John 13 He said, “A new commandment I give to you...”
 - a. It wasn’t that the commandment to love one another was all that new – command dates all the way back to Leviticus and the command to loving one’s neighbor
 - b. But coming from Jesus – it was His new commandment
 - 2. And in John 15, He owns it
 - a. **John 15:12** (NASB95) — 12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another...”
 - 3. You cannot call yourself a Christian, a follower of Jesus
 - a. And then play fast and loose with a commandment that He calls “My commandment”

III. **The Extent of Love**

- A. The second observation we can make has to do with the extent of the love that Jesus requires of us as we love one another

1. **John 15:12** (NASB95) — 12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”
 - a. “As I have loved you...”
- B. This is not new to the commandment
 1. **John 13:34** (NASB95) — 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
- C. Wow!
 1. That’s an incredible kind of love!
 - a. The extent of love that Jesus requires for us in loving one another is the same extent to which Jesus Himself loved us!
- D. What does that mean?
 1. Well, Jesus explains exactly what it means
 2. **John 15:13** (NASB95) — 13 “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”
 - a. In other words, “I want you to be willing to die for your brothers and sisters in Christ.”
- E. Maybe a willingness to die for someone you love is not all that unusual
 1. For that special someone
 - a. We know of people like that
 - b. Just recently in North Carolina a father and a son were fishing off a dock
 - c. The 5 year old fell in; father jumped in after him
 - d. They both disappeared
 2. So it happens
 - a. Father dies trying to save the life of his beloved child
 - b. In this case, they both died
 3. In Atlantic City, a father went in after a child who was having trouble trying to stay afloat
 - a. In that case the child was able to make it back to shore
 - b. But the father went under and drowned
- F. But Jesus isn’t talking about dying for someone with whom you have a special relationship
 1. He’s talking about a willingness to die for any of the “one anothers” that we described earlier
 - a. Those that we like and those we’re not so fond of
 - b. Those that look us and those who don’t
 - c. Those who are “good” and those who aren’t
- G. Paul puts it this way
 1. **Romans 5:7–8** (NASB95) — 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 2. Christ died for sinners!
- H. Now Jesus says, **John 15:13** (NASB95) — 13 “Greater love has no one than this,

that one lay down his life for his friends.”

1. So Jesus speaks about laying down one’s life for his friends
2. But when Jesus died for us – we weren’t His friends
 - a. Not yet!
 - b. Jesus died for sinners
 - c. Jesus died for His enemies!
- I. Only because of Jesus’ saving work, and only because of having been born of the Spirit (John 3), have we become His friends
 1. That’s the extent of the love of one another that Jesus requires
 - a. A willingness to die for one another
- J. But you know, what Jesus requires may seem to be one thing when dying is like a father diving in a river to save someone
 1. But the dying often needs to happen in the ordinary, mundane conflicts of life
 2. When the wills of two people oppose one another
 - a. When husband and wife have opposite desires
 - b. When competing visions for ministry put church leaders in conflict
 3. That’s when dying really has to happen
 - a. That’s dying to self and sin
 4. And that’s the kind of love that Jesus requires

IV. The Friendship of Love

- A. But what about friendship?
- B. John 15:13–15 (NASB95) —
 1. 13 “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
 2. 14 “You are My friends if you do what I command you.
 3. 15 “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”
- C. So who are the friends of Jesus?
 1. They those who do the commands of Jesus
 - a. “You are My friends if you do what I command you.”
 2. Jesus says you are His friends if you obey His commands
- D. James Boice identified three aspects of obedience that flow from this verse
 1. Active obedience
 - a. “You are My friends if you *do* what I command you.”
 - b. We actually act positively in response to the commands of Christ; we do the commands
 - c. That’s important because many church-going people think of obedience in terms of what *not* to do
 - d. Don’t do this; don’t do that
 - e. Don’t drink alcohol
 - f. Don’t engage in extramarital sexual relations
 - g. Don’t play cards

- h. Don't gamble
 - i. Whatever...
 - j. But doing Jesus' commands are positive
 - k. Do meet together for worship
 - l. Do pray for one another
 - m. Do bear one another's burdens
 - n. Do read the scriptures
 - o. Do work to fulfill the Great Commission
2. **Continuous obedience**
- a. Not just doing something on a particular day of the week (like Sunday)
 - b. But obey the commands of Christ 24-7
 - c. Present tense verb – do what I command
 - d. Not punctiliar – at a point in time
 - e. But continuously
3. **Universal obedience**
- a. "You are My friends if you do what I command you"
 - b. What is a plural pronoun
 - c. NKJV – whatever
 - d. We are not to pick and choose which commands of Christ to obey
 - e. The friends of Jesus seek to obey all the commands of Christ, as much as they are known and understood
 - f. And as we are given opportunity to do so
- E. A couple of thoughts about this active, continual and universal obedience
1. First, **Our obedience will never be perfect** in this life
- a. We are still sinners saved by the grace of God
 - b. We are sanctified but are being sanctified – we are in the process of becoming more like Jesus
 - c. **Philippians 3:12–14** (NASB95) — 12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
 - d. That's Paul! He's not perfect
 - e. I take great comfort in that
2. Second, **We can't do it!**
- a. That is, we can't, in our own human strength, obey the commands of Christ
 - b. It's only by the power of the Holy Spirit living and working in us that enables us to obey Christ
 - c. **Galatians 5:16** (NASB95) — 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
 - d. **Philippians 2:12–13** (NASB95) — 12 So then, my beloved, just as

you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

3. So active, continuous, obedience
 - a. However imperfect, but however substantial and growing
 - b. Is possible because of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer
- F. But look also at the privilege of friendship with Christ
 1. There is obedience, but there is also an amazing privilege
 2. **John 15:15** (NASB95) — 15 “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.
 3. Do you realize what an extraordinary privilege it is to be called a friend of Jesus?
 - a. Do you realize that we are friends of Jesus because He reveals what the Father has told Him? All that the Father has told Him?
 - b. Do you realize that Jesus has revealed His will for our lives?
- G. Friendship relies on communication
 1. And the deeper the friendship, the deeper the communication
 - a. And Jesus bared His soul to us
 2. Of course, in order for us to receive that communication, we need to be in the Word
 - a. That’s why we do Study with the Pastor together
 - b. That’s why we have Bible studies
 - c. That’s why we preach Christ from our pulpit
 - d. That’s why we’re working through the gospel of John!
 3. He shares His thoughts with us
 4. And in prayer, we have the privilege of sharing our thoughts with Him
 - a. And in listening to Him speak to us
 5. We’re not slaves – we’re His friends
 - a. Because He communicates with us – and gives us the privilege of communicating with Him
- V. **The Origin of Love**
 - A. This is extraordinary love, isn’t it; this loving one another
 1. Where does it come from?
 - a. Well, not from us!
 - b. We couldn’t imagine this kind of relationship with Jesus, this kind of loving, in our human nature on our best day!
 - B. **John 15:16** (NASB95) — 16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you...”
 1. The origin of this kind of love is Jesus Himself
 - a. He initiated it
 - b. He chose us
 2. When did He do that?

- a. Didn't I have anything to do with it?
 - 3. No! You weren't even around when He chose you
 - a. **Ephesians 1:3-4** (NASB95) — 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. ...
 - b. His choice of His friends happened before you were even a glint in your mother's eye
 - 4. **1 John 4:19** (NASB95) — 19 We love, because He first loved us.
- C. Some of you will find that offensive
 - 1. You feel the need to claim some role, some credit for coming to Christ
 - 2. But the rest of you will fall on your faces in praise and adoration
 - a. Realizing what great mercy, what great grace you have received
 - b. Because Jesus loved you, because Jesus chose you
- D. I had a man in my prior church
 - 1. Every time he was given an opportunity to testify in a meeting or service, he would always begin, with tears in his eyes, say something like, "I can't believe why God chose me! I can't believe that God would love me!"
 - 2. It's time you put whatever philosophical issues you have with God's choice aside – and worship
 - a. And thank God for the love of Jesus
 - 3. **Ephesians 2:4-9** (NASB95) — 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
- E. Jesus calls us to love one another
 - 1. As He has loved us, He has called us to love one another
 - 2. And in so doing, He calls us His friends
 - 3. And Jesus was the initiator of our friendship
 - a. He is the origin of our love
 - b. Because He first loved us
 - c. And because He first chose us

VI. **The Benefits of Love**

- A. Finally, look at the benefits of love
- B. **John 15:16** (NASB95) —
 - 1. 16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

- C. Two wonderful benefits
1. **Fruit**
 - a. We are appointed to bear fruit
 2. We've already learned a great deal about fruit-bearing in John 15
 - a. We get to see yet another glorious aspect of the fruit which comes as we abide in Christ
 3. **15.2 – bear fruit**
 - a. **15.2** – abiding in Christ means bearing **more fruit**
 - b. **15.5, 8** – abiding in Christ means bearing **much fruit** – a superlative degree of fruit!
 4. And now – **15.16** – **fruit that remains**; fruit that lasts
 5. When I was teaching at WVU I was privileged to help lead a program into national prominence in the field in which I taught
 - a. I certainly hope that some of the things that I was able to establish before I left would still be there after a while
 - b. But I'm not naive
 - c. I've been gone nearly 9 years; I'm sure that program bears little resemblance to some of the things I was able to do
 - d. Most of those things were fruitful – but not eternal
 6. But in Christ, by His Spirit
 - a. As we abide in Christ, we are able to bear fruit that will last
 - b. Last for all eternity
 7. **1 Corinthians 3:12–13** (NASB95) — 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.
 8. Bottom line – abiding in Christ, we will bear fruit that will remain, that will last
 - a. Eternal fruit
- D. And second, as we love one another, God promises to answer our prayers
1. **John 15:16** (NASB95) — 16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.
 2. Fruit bearing, answered prayer
 - a. The benefits of loving one another
- VII. Conclusion
- A. Are you a friend of Jesus?
 1. Are you committed to loving all the one anothers in your world?
 2. Are you willing to obey Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit?
 3. Are you grateful for the privilege of knowing Jesus, of being a recipient of His loving communication, of experiencing His answered prayer?