

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 13:21-38

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Today's sermon is very important because it is very practical. It can greatly improve your life, and the overall health of our church. We are going to discuss an essential Christian teaching. It is not a doctrinal sermon – what Christians should believe; it is an ethical teaching – how Christians should live.
2. In our study of the Gospel of John, Jesus and His disciples are in Jerusalem. It is the night before His crucifixion. They are in an upstairs room sharing one last supper. Jesus has just taught them a lesson on servanthood by washing their feet. Now He is going to give them a new command.

II. TEXT & COMMENTARY: John 13:21-38

1. *21 When Jesus had said this, he was troubled in his spirit and testified, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."*
2. *22 The disciples started looking at one another—uncertain which one he was speaking about. 23 One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. 24 Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was he was talking about. 25 So he leaned back against Jesus and asked him, "Lord, who is it?"*
 - i. "the one Jesus loved" is John, the author of the gospel. Jesus loved all the disciples, but appears to have had a special bond with John.
 - ii. Jesus predicted that one of His disciples would betray Him. So, Peter told John to ask Jesus who it was. So, John leaned back and asked Jesus.
 - iii. It is interesting that none of the disciples knew who the betrayer would be, except for Judas had them fooled. The rest thought it could be one of them, but that it would be an unconscious, or unintentional betrayal.
3. *26 Jesus replied, "He's the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it." When he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot's son. 27 After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. So Jesus told him, "What you're doing, do quickly."*
 - i. There is a very famous painting of this occasion by Leonardo da Vinci, but it gives the wrong impression.
 - ii. Scholars have a good idea of the seating arrangements, which I believe you will find interesting.
 - iii. The common table back then was a three-sided table called a triclinium. The middle was open for serving and entertainment.
 - iv. People would lie down on their left side, prop themselves up on their left elbow, and then eat with their right hand.
 - v. The seating arrangement would have been from left to right, the most significant to the least significant.

- vi. The host, which would have been Jesus, would have sat on the second seat from the left.
 - vii. On the right side of the host was the host's assistant, or right-hand-man. Scholars believe that this was John, because at one point John leans back against Jesus to ask Him who the identity of the betrayer (John 13:23).
 - viii. On the left side of the host was the guest of honor. And this is where it gets interesting. Scholars believe that Judas Iscariot, Jesus's betrayer, was sitting to the left of Jesus as the guest of honor. Why? In **John 13:26** Jesus replied, "He's the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it." Other than John, on His right, there was only one other person who would be close enough to dip his hand in the bowl with Jesus, and that would be the person on Jesus's left, the guest of honor.
 - ix. Why did Jesus make Judas the guest of honor, knowing that he would betray Him?
 - x. I believe that Christ did it to illustrate His unconditional love for us. Knowing all the bad things we have done, and all the bad things we will do in the future, Christ still loves us.
 - xi. Think about it. If Jesus loved Judas, his betrayer, to the very end, knowing what Judas would do to Him, then surely Jesus loves you in spite of all the things you've done.
4. *28 None of those reclining at the table knew why he said this to him. 29 Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the festival," or that he should give something to the poor. 30 After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night.*
- i. Jesus told Judas, "What you're doing, do it quickly," but none of the disciples knew what He was talking about. This indicates that said, "It's one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it," nobody heard Jesus but John.
5. *31 When he had left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.*
- i. Christ being glorified refers to His death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - ii. Verse 32 is kind of confusing, so let me paraphrase it: Christ glorified the Father through the cross, so the Father will glorify Christ through His resurrection and ascension.
6. *33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'*
7. *34 "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*
8. *36 "Lord," Simon Peter said to him, "where are you going?"*

9. *Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later."*
 - i. Jesus was speaking of dying and going to heaven.
10. 37 *"Lord," Peter asked, "why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."*
11. 38 *Jesus replied, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times."*
 - i. Peter said He was ready to die for Christ, but Christ knew that later that night He would deny Christ three times.
 - ii. Thirty years later Peter would die for Christ. He would be crucified upside down, because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus.

III. A NEW COMMAND

1. I want to zoom in on the most important verses in this passage.
2. **John 13:34-35** "34 I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
3. Jesus gave His disciples a new command, to love one another just as He has loved them.
4. The command to love one another is ancient, going back way before the time of Christ.
 - i. **Leviticus 19:18** "Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD."
 - ii. Previously, in Christ's teachings, He said that the greatest commandment was to Love God, and then the second was to love your neighbor as yourself (Mk 12:29-31).
 - iii. So, why did Jesus say this was a new command?
5. It was a new command for three reasons:
 - i. It had a new standard. Previously, the command had been to love your neighbor as yourself. Christ raised the standard and said we must love one another as Christ loves us.
 - ii. It had a new object. The previous command was to love your neighbor, which is anyone you come into contact with. Here the command is to love one another – fellow believers. It is not that we are to no longer love our neighbors, but Christ placed a special emphasis on the importance of love to other Christians.
 1. **Galatians 6:10** "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith." The AMP translates Gal 6:10, "especially [be a blessing] to those of the household of faith (born-again believers)." The ERV says, "But we should give special attention to those who are in the family of believers."

- iii. It had a new energy. Previously people were to love their neighbors with their own strength. But after Christ's death and resurrection, on the Day of Pentecost, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell all believers, giving us the power to love in a supernatural way.
 - 6. So, with the rest of our time let's talk about obeying this new command.
 - 7. Let's begin with five questions:
 - i. What is love?
 - 1. The Greek word for love in this passage is agape.
 - 2. Andy Manning (*Raising Kids of Christlike Character*) "Agape is not the same as liking someone. We are supposed to love people even if we do not like them. Agape is not the same as approving of someone's behavior. You can love someone and hate their sin at the same time. Agape is not the same as agreeing with someone. You can disagree with someone and still love them. Agape is not the same as being a doormat. The truly loving person knows how and when to say "No." Agape is not the same as feeling good about someone. We must love people even if we don't feel like it, and even when people make us feel bad. Agape is not love for everything. We are commanded to love everyone, not everything. In fact, we cannot fully love others unless we hate sin. Agape does not elevate people above God. Our love for others must never cause us to compromise our love for God. Disobeying God is never the way to love others. **Love is doing what is best for people, not what makes them feel good. It is giving people what they need, not what they want.** Think about the love of a parent. To truly love their children, parents must do what is best for their children, not what makes them feel good. Sometimes the best thing for a child is a spanking. Parents must meet the needs of their children, not their wants. Kids often want things that are not good for them, such as eating candy all day long. We must love others in the same way, doing what is best for them, and meeting their needs. This is not always what people want, or what makes them feel good. Sometimes love means speaking a hard truth, or saying "No", or making your kids do something hard or uncomfortable."
 - ii. Who are we to love?
 - 1. Fellow believers.
 - 2. As Christians, we are called to love everyone, but there are certain people that we must love especially; with a stronger love. For example, I must love all children, but especially my children. I must love all parents, but especially my parents. As Christians, we must love all people, but especially fellow believers.
 - iii. Why are we to love?

1. It is a command.
- iv. How are we to love?
 1. As Christ loved us.
- v. What is the reward for this love?
 1. It confirms your salvation. It is evidence of authentic salvation.
 2. How can you tell if you are genuinely saved? One of the signs is a strong love for other believers.
 3. **1 John 3:17** “If anyone has this world’s goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God’s love reside in him?”

IV. HOW TO LOVE LIKE JESUS

1. Service.

- i. Meet the physical and spiritual needs of fellow believers.
- ii. Jesus went about meeting needs, both spiritual and physical.
 1. He taught people about God.
 2. He paid for our sins on the cross.
 3. He fed the multitudes, healed the sick, and delivered the demon possessed, and washed feet.
- iii. To love like Jesus, we must humbly serve our church family, meeting physical and spiritual needs.
- iv. **Romans 12:13** “Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality.”
- v. **Galatians 6:2** “Carry one another’s burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”
- vi. **Acts 9:36, 39** “36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated Dorcas). She was always doing good works and acts of charity.... 39 Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs. And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them.”
- vii. Examples:
 1. Give financial assistance.
 2. Give someone a ride.
 3. Help someone move.
 4. Help someone find a job.
 5. Let someone use your computer.
 6. Give someone Biblical counsel.
 7. A word of encouragement or comfort.
 8. Visiting the sick and the grieving.

2. Sacrifice.

- i. Give up what is dear to you to help fellow believers.

- ii. Jesus exemplified this kind of love when He came to earth, become a human being and endured all of the same trials and temptations as us, and then died on the cross for our sins.
- iii. **John 15:12-13** “12 “This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.”
- iv. To love like Jesus, we must be willing to not merely serve others, but serve sacrificially.
- v. This kind of love was exemplified by the early church. **Acts 2:44-45** “44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.”
- vi. The kind of love for other believers that we are called to is not easy love; comfortable love; convenient love. It is costly love; hard love; painful love; life-giving love; uncomfortable love; sacrificial love. It’s the kind of love that throws yourself onto a grenade to save others.

3. Truth-telling.

- i. Be willing to speak the hard truth to other believers.
- ii. Jesus often had tough conversations with people in order to help them.
 1. When Jesus and the disciples were in a boat and the disciples freaked out about the storm, Jesus said, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Mt 8:26
 2. When Jesus told the disciples that He would have to suffer and die, Peter rebuked Him. So Jesus said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns but human concerns.” Mt 16:23
 3. When Jesus and the disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, they wanted to take a shortcut through a Samaritan village, but the village did not welcome them. James and John said, “Lord, let’s call down fire from heaven to destroy them.” But Jesus rebuked them. Lk 9:51-56
 4. As word was spreading that Jesus had risen from the grave, the disciples did not believe it. So, he appeared to the Eleven as they were eating dinner and rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart. Mk 16:14
- iii. We must be willing to do the same with our brothers and sisters.
- iv. **Matthew 17:3** “Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.”
- v. When you see a fellow believer committing a sin, you are called to rebuke them. This doesn’t mean to fuss at them. It means to point out their sin and encourage them to repent.

- vi. Apparently God doesn't just speak to us and convict us and motivate us to repent through His word, and through the Holy Spirit, but through each other. We cannot be all that Christ wants us to be without this essential expression of love – truth-telling.
- vii. This must be done with the right attitude.
 1. **Ephesians 4:15** "But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head—Christ."
 2. **Galatians 6:1** "Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted."
- viii. Truth-telling is a form of sacrificial love because it is risky. You risk being rejected. You risk being fussed at. You risk losing the friendship. But this is the kind of love we are called to.

4. Acceptance.

- i. Welcome other believers into the church regardless of their differences.
- ii. Jesus was the most accepting person in the world. He showed the same love, kindness, and respect to every person He encountered. He touched lepers. He loved on the children. He had a one-on-one conversation with a Samaritan woman. He stood up for the woman caught in adultery. He ate with sinners and tax collectors. One of His disciples was a tax collector. Several of His disciples were fishermen. Many of His disciples were women. Some of them were Pharisees.
- iii. To love like Jesus we must accept one another.
- iv. **Romans 15:7** "Therefore welcome [accept; receive] one another, just as Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God."
- v. What acceptance does not mean: Overlooking heresy and immorality. We just saw that an element of love is truth-telling – rebuking and warning those who are in sin. And the Bible teaches that the unrepentant should be disciplined.
- vi. Acceptance has to do with welcoming other believers into the church regardless of their differences – such as race; appearance; education; intelligence; finances, which kind of schooling they choose for their children; single or married; old or young; which team they cheer for.
- vii. The church must never become a clique that only accepts certain kinds of people. I've been to churches where everyone is rich, beautiful, and fashionable. These churches are very cool, but not very accepting.
- viii. The church must never be a collection of cliques like a high school. There must not be the rich clique; the youth clique; the fashionable clique; the educated clique; the singles clique. We must accept each other.

- ix. We should accept old and young, black and white, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, beautiful and homely, white collar and blue collar.

5. Forgiveness.

- i. Show kindness to other believers when they hurt you.
- ii. Jesus exemplified forgiveness on a number of occasions.
 - 1. After Peter denied Christ three times, Jesus forgave him and placed him in charge of the church.
 - 2. When Jesus was arrested, all of his disciples abandoned Him, but He forgave them.
 - 3. Each time the disciples did something sinful or foolish and Jesus had to rebuke them, He also forgave them.
- iii. We must forgive one another to love like Jesus.
- iv. **Ephesians 4:32** “And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.”
- v. The church is a group of imperfect people trying to follow Christ together. We are bound to sin against one another. To hurt one another. To rub each other the wrong way. To offend one another. This is to be expected in any organization or institution.
- vi. When most people get hurt in the church, they just leave. That’s not forgiveness. Forgiveness means showing kindness to believers when they hurt you. It means working through issues together. It means going to one another and saying, “You hurt my feelings,” and then apologizing and repenting.
- vii. The church is not a cancel culture, it is a forgiveness culture. When people blow it and do something stupid we don’t kick them out, we don’t abandon them, we don’t leave, we work through it together.
- viii. **Colossians 3:13** “bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.”
 - 1. What does it mean to bear with one another?
 - a. NLT: Make allowance for each other’s faults [give people permission to be imperfect; to slip up; to make mistakes]
 - b. TLB: Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges.
- ix. Think about it. Jesus commands us to love our enemies (Mt 5:44). If we are to love even our enemies, then surely we are to forgive our brothers and sisters in Christ.

V. TWO HINDRANCES TO LOVING OTHER BELIEVERS

- 1. Self-neglect.
 - i. You are in such bad shape that you cannot focus on anyone other than yourself. Your finances, health, relationships are all dysfunctional.
- 2. Un-involvement.

- i. If you don't know anybody, you can't love anybody. If nobody knows you, nobody can love you.

VI. CONCLUSION

1. So, in John 13:34-35 Christ gave us a new command – love one another as He has loved us. This command has several important implications:
 - i. We need the love of other believers to live a victorious Christian life. We cannot do it alone.
 - ii. Others need our love. We have an important role to play in the church.
 - iii. We need the exercise of loving others. Loving others will help us to grow and be healthy; it will prevent us from becoming selfish and unfruitful.
 - iv. Jesus loves us. He wants us to be cared for.
 - v. The purpose of the church is brotherly love. It is evangelism, discipleship, and worship, but don't forget about brotherly love, or fellowship. We are to love each other like family.