

BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

INTRODUCTION: Anyone know what day tomorrow is—besides Monday? **Valentine's Day!**

So, what's the big deal about Valentine's Day? **Last Sunday**, one of the children in Sunday school asked where the idea of Valentine's Day came from. I replied with something very profound like, "It was created to guilt guys into spending billions of dollars on their wives or girlfriends..."—or something to that effect.

There's more to it than that, of course. One legend says a man named Valentine refused to convert to paganism and was executed on February 14th by a Roman Emperor in 296 A.D.

Another legend—and the reason Valentine's Day is **focused on romance**—is that a priest named Valentine performed weddings for soldiers—against the rules of the Roman Emperor at that time. The emperor believed that married soldiers did not make good warriors, so he forbade marriage. This priest supposedly **wore a ring with a cupid** on it to help the soldiers recognize him. He also allegedly handed out paper hearts to remind Christians of God's love. He, too, was killed on February 14th.

Valentine's Day now is **big business**—second only in sales to Christmas! According to the National Retail Federation, **last year** was the **first year** that money spent on Valentine's Day was **less than** the year before.

Only 21.8 billion was spent in 2021—compared to **27.4 billion** in 2020!

Not only did 2020 set the record in total sales, it was also a record-setting year for gifts spent on.... **brace yourself... pets!** According to the NRF, 27% of shoppers—more than 1 in 4—bought Valentine's Day gifts for **animals**. Total spent **on pets** in 2020? 1.7 billion!

The pandemic did have **one positive** impact on Valentine's Day spending, though. In 2020, nearly 27% of adult Valentine's Day shoppers planned on buying a gift for **more than one romantic partner**. That dropped down to less than 13% in 2021. I guess when you are stuck in the house most of the time—and maybe working from home—it is a little more difficult to **be romantic** with **two different people** at the same time!

So why talk about an **over-hyped holiday** focused on "love"—that really **isn't a holiday**—and is actually more about **money** than it is about love? No real reason other than this—the Bible has a **lot to say about love** and it is good to be reminded of some of those things from time to time.

The word "love" appears in 442 verses in our KJ Bibles—240 in the OT; 202 in the NT. Jesus Himself used the word more than 50 times. Jesus talked about the love we should have **for God**, but He also talked about the love we should have **for one another**. Jesus **did not just teach about it**, though—He actually **commanded** us to love one another. And that is what I want to focus our attention on this morning.

First, we are going to look at... **1. The command to love one another**

Please take your Bibles and turn to John 15; follow along as I read verses 11-17.

A. Commanded by Christ

Twice in the verses I just read, we see Jesus **commanding** His disciples to love one another.

--vs 12 "This is my **commandment**, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you."

--vs 17 "These things I **command you**, that ye **love one another**."

What is a commandment? No; this is **not** a **trick question!** A commandment is **an order**...a command...a charge. It is **not** something that is **optional** to do—it is something we are **obligated** to do!

Flip back a couple of pages to John 13:34 "A new **commandment** I give unto you, That ye **love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also **love one another**." Here we have the commandment again.

B. Repeated by Others

Not going to spend too much time on this because we **already know** that we are supposed to love one another. God says as much through Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. **1 Thessalonians 4:9** "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **love one another**."

I John 3:23 “And this is **His commandment**, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, as **He gave us commandment**.”

II John 1:5 “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a **new commandment** unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we **love one another**.”

The question then, is not whether or not **we know** we should love one another. The question is: “Are we doing it? Are we obeying Jesus’ command to love one another?”

You should still be in John 13; look at verse 35 “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Jesus gave the **command** to love one another in vs 34; in vs 35 He states that...

2. A characteristic of God’s people is to love one another

That characteristic is... A. Stated by Jesus

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

In essence, Jesus is saying that the **love you have for one another** will be what distinguishes you from other people! Simply put, **followers of Jesus will love other followers of Jesus!**

Jesus didn’t just **say that**, of course—He also demonstrated it a number of different times and in different ways. Remember what people said as they watched **Jesus weep at the grave** of Lazarus before bringing him back to life? John 11:36 “Then said the Jews, ‘Behold how He loved him!’”

Jesus was not the only one who stated that **love for one another** is a characteristic of the followers of God. It was stated by Jesus; but it was ... B. Restated by others

I John 3:14 “We know that we have **passed from death unto life**, because we **love the brethren**. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”

--An evidence that you are a child of God—that you have passed from having the death penalty hanging over your head—to being forgiven—is that you **love other believers!** If you don’t love fellow believers, you **abide in death**—meaning you **aren’t really** a child of God!

I John 4:7 “Beloved, let us **love one another**: for love is of God; and every one that loveth **is born of God**, and knoweth God.”

--Again, an indicator that you are **born of God**—that you are born again—is that you will love other people in God’s family! The kids and I were talking about that in Sunday School last week and they “got a kick” out of considering one another as **brothers and sisters** in Christ!

3. The character of our love for one another—as Christ loved us!

We’re still in John 13, notice again vs 34 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another; as I have loved you**, that ye also love one another.”

How are we to love one another? What should be the **character** of our love for each other? As I was studying this, I was struck by the fact that Jesus said this **before He died** for them. When we think of Jesus’ love for us, **we think of the cross**—and rightly so! **John 15:13** “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life** for his friends.”

But I believe there is some significance in the fact that Jesus commanded them to love one another in the way **He loved them before He died for them**. We obviously can’t rehearse all of the 3-1/2 years Jesus spent with them, but let’s consider some things that had happened just prior to Jesus making this statement.

A. Jesus humbly served them

We have that right here in chapter 13, don’t we?

--Look at verses 4-5.

--Now drop down to vs 12 and follow along as I read through vs 15.

Pretty straightforward, isn’t it? ‘If I’m your Lord and Master—and I am—and I washed your feet, you need to be willing to wash one another’s feet.’ In other words, we need to be willing to take the lowly place of a servant and esteem others better than ourselves.

B. Jesus treated them all the same

Did Jesus wash **all the disciples'** feet—even the feet of Judas Iscariot? **He did**, didn't He!

--vs 11 "For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean."

Notice what Jesus says in vs 21—**after** He had washed their feet...

--vs 21 "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **one of you shall betray** me."

What does it say after that? It says, 'Immediately, **they all looked at Judas!**' It **doesn't say that at all**, does it? What **does it say?** Vs 22 "Then the disciples **looked one on another, doubting** of whom He spake."

In other words, the disciples **had no idea** who the "betrayed" was! Jesus knew—we just read it in vs 11—and Judas himself obviously knew. But the other disciples were clueless!

You know why? Because Jesus **treated Judas the same way He treated all the others**—even though He knew well before it happened that Judas would literally "sell Him out" for 30 pieces of silver!

We've seen the command to love one another...and that loving one another is something that identifies us as belonging to God...and that we should love each other in the manner that Jesus loved us.

Lastly, I want to consider... **4. Carrying out the command to love one another**

So how—in a practical way—can we carry out this command to love one another? Before we look at specifics, I think it is important to **start with the heart**. We can be **guilted into** doing things—and **reluctantly do** them—but God wants our heart, doesn't He?

To start off, then, we need an A. Attitude adjustment

Take your Bibles and turn to Philippians 2.

--vs 3 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind **let each esteem other better than themselves.**"

--That's hard, isn't it? We esteem **ourselves better** than others—not **others better** than ourselves! And yet, that is the attitude that God calls us to have.

Romans 12:10 "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in **honour preferring one another;**"

I Peter 2:17a "Honour all men...."

--vs 4 "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." That means, don't just be concerned about **your own** well-being—be concerned about the well-being **of others**.

--vs 5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

The mind—the **attitude of being others-oriented** that Jesus had—is to be in us!

Epaphroditus, a friend of Paul's, obviously had this attitude. Notice vs 25. He was a brother—meaning fellow **believer**—as well as a **fellow-laborer and fellow-soldier** in the faith. He also "ministered to my wants." In other words, he took care of some of Paul's needs while Paul was in prison.

How sacrificial was his care for Paul? Look at vs 30 "Because for the work of Christ he was **nigh unto death, not regarding his life**, to supply your lack of service toward me." Although we don't know the details of his sickness—or how close he was to death—we do know this: supplying Paul's needs is what got him to that point!

Not surprisingly, Paul also had an "other's-oriented" attitude. **II Cor 12:15** "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." Paul was willing **to spend**—to **put out for them**—his resources, time, and very life for their well-being. He was also willing **to be spent**—to be exhausted and worn out—in laboring for them—just like parents often do for their children.

--What about us? Do we esteem others better than ourselves?

--Are we concerned only about the things that pertain to us—or are we concerned about the needs of others? --**We are** our brother's keeper! What kind of brother—or sister—are we?

Let's consider now a couple of ways we can put into practice Jesus' command to love one another.

A rather obvious one is what Epaphroditus did for Paul and that is...

B. Helping with the needs of others.

What kinds of needs?

i. Material needs

I'm going to have you turn to one more passage—I John 3.

Notice vs 16 “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to **lay down our lives** for the brethren.” Here we have a reason we are to “lay down our lives for the brethren”—because God laid down His life for us!

John is not necessarily talking about giving up our **physical life**, though—he is talking about giving **material things** to meet the needs of others! We know that from the next verse.

--vs 17 “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” If a brother in Christ has a literal, physical need, we need to be willing to help meet that need if possible.

--vs 18 “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” Simply put, don't just say you love someone—prove it!

James reminds us that “faith without works is dead,” then gives the following as part of his argument. **James 2:15-16** “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding **ye give them not those things** which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?”

ii. Time needs

Sometimes fellow believers don't need **things**—they just needing **a helping hand**. Not long ago, I moved a few pieces of furniture up to Wisconsin Rapids. Instead of having someone **from here** drive up there with me, I reached out to a Pastor friend from Wisconsin Rapids. I couldn't get ahold of him on Monday, but on Tuesday—as I was **on my way there**—I was able to reach him on the phone. I hadn't seen or talked to him for about 3 years, but he was willing to help me on a one-hour's notice. That was an incredible blessing to me!

iii. Talent needs

When we moved to Lake Mills in 2002, we bought a house that needed **a lot** of work! One of the deacons at the church said that if I ever needed any help to let him know. I found out later that one of the verses he tried to live by was **Galatians 6:10** “As we have therefore opportunity, **let us do good unto all men**, especially unto them who are of the **household of faith**.”

At any rate, I took him up on his offer—and shortly thereafter he helped me put in a hot water heater! He also helped me with quite a few other projects during the 13 years we lived there. Thankfully he never rescinded his offer!

iv. Time and talent needs

We finalized the buying of our house up here in July of 2017. That fall I made a number of trips back and forth with my little 4x8 trailer. On one particular trip, people were honking and waving and motioning to me. I didn't think anything of it because I had a dresser drawer that was opening and closing—but I wasn't worried about it because I knew it couldn't fall out!

Not only did I ignore all the motioning and waving that people were doing, I also ignored—probably for quite some time—**the smoke** that could be seen behind my trailer. When I finally realized that **I was the one** producing the smoke, I pulled over and found out that one of my trailer tires was shot—and shredded!

--I called Andrew—he came with his pickup to take the load off my trailer—and then I called Art and Don! They came with one of **their trailers** to pick up **my trailer**. What a blessing it was to have people who were willing to give both their time and talents to help me out on extremely short notice!

--To this day, I can't help but wonder if Art and Don ever asked each other what kind of Pastor they had called here to Necedah 😊!

Just as important as those kinds of needs, though, is C. Bearing the burdens of others

God through Paul tells us we are to do that. **Gal 6:2** “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” We are to be concerned with what our brothers and sister in Christ are going through.

Do they—or a family member—have a health need? Are they struggling with discouragement?

Do they need someone to **listen to them**—or a **shoulder** to cry on? We should be there for them, shouldn't we? On Friday, a friend from Marshfield called me. He visited once since we've been here, but it was probably 4 years ago. He just found out recently that he had cancer—and he wanted me to know.

I was glad that he did! I **can't heal him**—but God certainly can! And I can pray for him—and have us as a church pray for him, too! Praying for one another is a big part of bearing one another's burdens.

Are we doing that?

James 5:16 "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another..."

I Samuel 12:23 "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you..."

Jesus said in John 15:17 "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Jesus also said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Are we obeying Jesus' command to love one another?

So what would God have us do in light of His Word this morning?

1. First, I think you'd agree that God wants us to obey His command to love one another. Like any command, it is not something we do **naturally**. It is something we need to work on—and it is something we need God's help in doing. Two simple suggestions:

--Ask God to give you a sensitivity to the needs of others

--Treat them the way you wanted to be treated.

--Would you want a phone call? Then call them!

--Would you want them to ask you if you need help? Then ask them!

2. Please know, though, that if you have **never trusted Christ** as your Savior, loving others won't get you to heaven! **Titus 3:5** "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us..." It is not about what **you do**—it is about what Jesus did for you on the cross!

--Have you received God's gift to us—His Son Jesus Christ?