

Title: Love – Pass It On  
Date: 08/25/24  
Subject: Christians are to copy Jesus love for us as he copied the Father’s love for him.  
Scripture: John 15:9 - 17

Dreams can be weird. I had one this week about a cardinal walking and hopping around near the front of the sanctuary. Then he was in between the entry doors and was able to get him to fly out.

My dream about a cardinal likely came because we've had a pesky one at church. He's been bombarding various windows since spring. He's loud enough to make volunteer cleaners think there's somebody in the church. Somehow the little creature got into my subconsciousness.

Jesus has something he wants to get into our subconsciousness, maybe even our unconsciousness, but most definitely our consciousness.

READ John 15:9 - 17

## I. Love

### A. Base level - the Father loves the Son V. 9

Jesus uses this as the starting position. He states that God the Father loves God the Son. No brainer. Don't think there's any way people could deny God the Father would love God the Son.

Just how the Father loves the Son is an interesting and intriguing point to ponder. I don't know that I've heard people talk about this very much, if at all. It's kind of more of an assumption, but doesn't come with much explanation of the nuts and bolts.

The question remains: how did/does the Father love the Son? It would be accurate to say fully, completely, eternally. Nice words, true words, but they don't exactly explain the love dynamic.

We don't have a full picture of “the how” as God is perfect and infinite...and those qualities describe his love. We do have a few ideas as we see the Father and Son connection throughout these chapters.

The Father shares this glory with the Son (13:31, 32). The Father entrusts his message to come through the Son he sent from heaven to earth (14:10, 24; 15:15). Jesus was given the message from the Father (14:10; 17:4). Jesus is the message. He is the Word. The Father works through the Son. One of the mysteries of the Trinity is the delegation of position and function. Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son (16:15; 17:10). He shared everything. The Father granted authority over all people to the Son that he might give eternal life to all those who've been given him (17:2). The Father has chosen the Son to perform the most important work of all time – bringing salvation from sins to people.

This doesn't sound like the Father was holding anything back. The same can't be said for human relationships, even though they say they don't have secrets. There's always some secret. There's always something that hasn't been shared, some experience, some thought.

I came up with a word play on John 3:16: “God so loved the Son that he gave him the world.” I’ve been struggling if that’s sufficient or not. I think limiting it to the world isn’t large enough to express God’s love for the Son. Since God the Father shares everything that belongs to him with God the Son, it’d be more accurate to say he gave him the universe and gave all of himself. The Father and Son share everything there is about being God.

This brings us to the response from the Son. It would be logical to expect the Son would return love to the Father. I’m absolutely, positively, 100% certain the Son of God loves God the Father. However, that isn’t the point Jesus makes at this moment. He speaks about the progression of love – Father to Son to . . .

B. Next step - The Son's love for those who are his v. 9

Jesus was speaking to the disciples who were gathered around the table. He told them he loved them as the Father loved him. Why did Jesus love them? It wasn’t because of their qualifications – Peter was the most likely to be Christian of the Year, Matthew was highly rated by the Jerusalem Better Business Bureau. And they didn’t choose Jesus as was the custom of the day for a rabbi to be chosen by those who wanted to be taught by him. Jesus chose. He had chosen them to be with him.

By extension, all believers are included in the ones Jesus loves. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, loves those who place their trust in him. We could go to lots of other scriptures that talk about Christ’s love for us in the way the Father loved him. For the moment, let’s stay with The Upper Room Discourse. We can return to the words fully, completely and eternally. But curious minds want more.

The Son of God performs the work of bringing us to a saving knowledge of him and performing things like regeneration, justification, sanctification. He has delivered the message of the Father to us. He shares his glory now as he allows us to see him as the one and only way to the Father and he’ll share his glory in the future as He prepares a place for us so we’ll be with him and experience all he purposes for us. Though he doesn’t give us all things while we’re here on earth, he will provide completely and fully for us in heaven. He’ll share everything with us through the mystery of having eternal life. The Son has chosen those who would be his followers and appointed them to bear fruit that will last.

C. next step - believers vv. 9 - 11

What are we to do as recipients of love from the Son of God? This seems like the natural place for Jesus to weave in the great commandment of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength because of what God has done for us. It’s an appropriate response to love him in return . . . but, though Jesus uses the word command in this passage, it’s not in connection with loving God.

The end of V. 9 tells us what we’re to do. The challenge is to remain in his love.

*Remain* is one of the keywords in this part of Christ’s teaching. Prior verse speak about branches remaining in the vine. We’ll talk more extensively about what it means to *remain* during Sunday school time. For now, I’ll describe it by throwing out a whole bunch of words. Remain means to abide, stay, stay at home, not walk away, continue, endure, dwell, not turn from, persevere and maintain close contact, be in union, fellowship.

The question before us is how do we remain in the love of Jesus? Fortunately, it's not something where we have to seclude ourselves, go into deep thought, stroke our chins, gaze at the clouds.

Jesus provides the answer in the next verse. Reread V. 10.

This wasn't the first time Jesus called upon his followers to obey his commands: 14:15 – “If you love me, you will obey what I command,” 14:21 – “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me,” 14:23 – “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.”

Jesus places a high priority on obeying his commands. He gives himself as the example as he obeyed his Father's commands. Obedience to his Father's commands meant that he remained in the Father's love. Earlier during the teaching in the upper room (14:31), he said he loved the Father and did exactly what his Father commanded him. We're to copy the example of Jesus who copied the example of the Father.

Another thing curious minds want to know is how many commands did Jesus give? Does it include everything in the New Testament? Some of the things from the Old Testament? How many could there be?

Before we get too far down the rabbit hole, Jesus goes on to clarify. Reread V. 12.

And if that isn't enough - reread V. 17.

Scripture tells us that loving our neighbor fulfills the royal law (Romans 13:8, 10; James 2:8). Jesus elevates the challenge level. It's no longer about loving others as we love ourselves but loving as Jesus loves us.— totally, fully, completely, selflessly with the servant attitude.

Jesus' command in this passage draws the circle a little smaller. He narrows it from neighbors to fellow believers. The instruction was first heard by 11 disciples in the upper room. They were to love one another as Jesus had loved them. This would be totally, completely and selflessly as Jesus had demonstrated his love by serving and would demonstrate by giving his life as a sacrifice for sins.

The Lord provides a general principle in v. 13 that can apply to people laying down their lives. Military personnel have shielded their buddies by jumping on a grenade and absorbing the blow. The Secret Service is pledged to give their lives for their protectee. At the Trump rally in Butler, PA when the former president was shot, Corey Comperatore died when he used his body to protect his family.

While people have given their lives for others and we honor them, the main point Jesus was making was about himself. His sacrifice is on a stratospherically different level as it was for all humanity, for all sin, for those who had been his enemies. He would lay down his life for his friends.

Fulfilling the call to love one another as Jesus had loved them would bring incredible challenges over the next few days. Love Peter who denied Jesus three times? Love each other when they all ran away and left Jesus? Love each other when they were scared and hiding because they thought they would be killed?

The circle of believers would include people they already knew, people who'd placed their trust in him as Savior. It would include family, friends, neighbors, former co-workers – Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, the paralyzed man Jesus healed. There'd be others who became Christians after Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead – Jesus' brothers, priests who were in the Temple when the

curtain was torn in two, the centurion who was present at the cross. There'd be the thousands who would come to Christ after Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. People from places the disciples visited when they proclaimed the good news of Jesus. There'd be those who formerly were considered unredeemable – the Gentiles. And a former persecutor of Christians – a guy named Paul.

What about us? Who is among the “each other” that we are to love? The first and most necessary place for love to be shown is in and to the local church family. The church is a field laboratory for testing and proving Christ's ideas about love. It's our job, duty, responsibility to look at other people and say, “I owe them the love of Christ.” It's for each one of us, you and me, to be vehicles through which Christ expresses his love to anyone and everyone who has placed their trust in Christ. This includes present company, obviously; people we've known before they came to Christ and are now believers – family, friends, neighbors, work associates. New believers. People from other countries.

How do we fulfill Christ's command? Accept each other - a diverse group of people with our quirks, peculiarities, distinctivenesses. Work to get to know each other rather than hold people at arms' length. Be inclusive in our conversations rather than retreating into private huddles. Share our joys and encouragements as well as our struggles. Be available to field a prayer request, listen, counsel, shoulder to lean on for emotional support, tell others that God loves them and you love them. The one anothers.

Lee Iacocca oversaw the development of the Ford Mustang when he was vice president for the carmaker. He once asked legendary football coach Vince Lombardi what it took to make a winning team. Lombardi's answer: “There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself: “If I don't block that man, Paul (running back) is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his. The difference between mediocrity and greatness is the feeling these guys have for each other.”

## II. Results/promises/rewards for obedience

Jesus has a hierarchy of relationships. In v. 14 Jesus says his friends are those who do what he commands. When he uttered those words, he was looking at his eleven disciples. He was also looking to the future, to those who hadn't physically seen him, to all who would place their trust in him to be their personal Savior.

Jesus says he no longer calls his followers servants. When did Jesus call them servants? He did so in several parables. He stated, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” (John 12:20). He most recently did it in the upper room just after he washed the disciples' feet: “I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (13:16). He brings that statement up in 15:20 where Jesus asked the disciples to remember the words that he spoke to them: “No servant is greater than his master.”

Though Jesus calls his followers friends, the apostles and other New Testament biblical writers frequently referred to themselves as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they were proud to do so. They viewed it as a badge of honor.

Jesus is a different story. He said the transition from servants to friends means they've become aware of God the Father's plans and purposes as Jesus has communicated these to them. They've been taken into confidence and are on the inside. The servant obeys merely because the master said so. The friend obeys because of the relationship.

Close connection with Jesus: v. 10 – “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love” and v. 14 – “You are my friends if you do what I command.” Joy: v.11 – “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” Answers to prayer: v. 16 – “I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

Earlier Jesus said, “all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (13:35). He wants our love to be high visibility not camouflaged. The most attractive thing we can showcase to the world is our deep and profound love for each other.

V. 11. Joy. Jesus wants us to have joy. Joy comes from Jesus who gives it to those who obey his commands and therefore remain in his love even as he obeyed his Father's commands and remain in his love.

Bob and Pam “adopted” a man who'd been recently released from prison and was living with his girlfriend. They helped them find a job. They provided groceries and other things for their home. They spent time with them and learned about his difficult life growing up. They opened their home to the two. One day the ex-con appeared at Bob and Pam's door while her father was visiting. The former prisoner was fidgety as he quickly told them that he and his girlfriend were leaving town immediately. A contract had been put out on him. With those few words, he was gone. Pam broke into tears. Her father knew what Bob and Pam had done for the couple and asked Pam if she was hurt because she had expended so much energy on them. Pam said she was but she was happy that “at least there was one time when they knew someone who cared.”

May we love each other following the example of Christ who loved us as his Father loved him.