

Sunday 2 Aug 2020

Good Morning I greet you in the Precious name of Jesus.

Hasn't the weather in this past week been beautifully warm. It feels like spring is on it's way.

Please continue to pray for all those who are affected by Covid.

Love

John 13:31-38

Today I want to look at an important passage in scripture. These were words spoken by Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed. They were words of a man who knew His time had come. There was no time to lose as every word that he said was important. In these verses, Christ gives us a new commandment which when obeyed will make us the most effective witnesses for Him. The key to reaching our community and our world for Christ is found in this three word command of Jesus, "Love one another"

The command to love one another is repeated three times by Jesus. Which shows how important it was to Him. So this morning I want to look at this passage in three ways. Firstly -the command to love. Secondly -the source and measure of Love and Thirdly- the result of love.

1.The Command To Love.

A. A New Command

Jesus begins in v.34 by giving his disciples the command of love, "A new commandment I give you: Love one another." I find it interesting that Jesus would say this command in the way he did for He describes it as a new command. Hadn't He told His disciples that they were to love each other before this. Although Jesus had taught the disciples a lot on the subject of love, He had never specifically commanded them to love one another before this. He had taught them of the importance of loving God. They were to love their enemies. I suppose one could say that by implication the command to love your neighbours would include each other.

I believe that Jesus gave His disciples this new command because He recognised the flaw that is in the lives of all of His followers- including you and me. I think that we are much better at, and much more apt to deal with love as a noun or an abstract concept than as a verb. We prefer talking about love, than to demonstrate it

Many of you would be able to tell me which chapter in the Bible deals with love. It

is of course 1 Cor 13. Some of you could even recite it to me. The problem is that we do not understand what love does by what it is. Rather we recognise what love is by what it does. To know about love in our heads takes understanding, but to know love in our hearts requires practice. Jesus' command is that we love one another, not merely talk about it

Several years ago the Olympics held in Seattle Washington was for the physical and mentally handicapped persons. The special event that was talked about for years afterwards was the 100 yard dash. There were 9 competitor lined up at the starting line. When the gun went off they started to run. The competitors were filled with excitement as they ran to the finish line. One little boy stumbled and fell. He rolled a few times and was crying his heart out. The other eight heard him, slowed down and looked back. They then all turned around and went back for him. One little girl bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked to the finish line together. Everybody in the stadium stood and applauded. What had the audience seen that day? They had seen love in action. And it had such a powerful effect on them that they stood and applauded.

B. A Necessary Command

The second reason this command is so interesting to me is because I find it hard to believe that Jesus would have to give his twelve disciples such a command as this. After all, they had spent the last three and a half years together in close contact with Him. Surely they should have come together as a family by now. But the events which unfolded that night may have, in fact, have prompted Jesus on this matter.

The occasion was that Jesus and His disciples were together to celebrate Passover. This was night that he would be betrayed and handed over to the Jewish authorities. This was a time when Jesus needed His friends more than ever. He could not count on them for comfort. They were so concerned about themselves, they were arguing over who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. There was not much love being shown towards each other.

Like Jesus' disciples we also have a tendency to focus our attention on matters that cause division and disputes. Lets face it, some of the hardest people to love are other Christians. That is why we are commanded to love. It's hard for us to love one another

It takes no effort at all to find fault in another and even less effort to publicize it. It's not surprising to any of us when we hear that our names have been dragged through the mud and the person responsible for it greets us cheerfully at church. Love is achieved through effort. Love can get messy. Love is costly. Love requires sacrifice. Love leaves us defenceless.

Although loving one another is not always easy, it is a necessary thing to do for Christ's kingdom, because it is a kingdom of love. We are commanded to love one

another because it is fundamental to our relationship to God. Loving one another is important if we are going to be of use in God's Kingdom. "A new command I give you: Love one another."

2. The Source and Measure of love.

A. The Source of Love

After giving us the command of love, Jesus goes on to describe the source and measure or extent to which this love is to be manifest: "As I have loved you, so you must love another."

We find the source of our love for one another by way of inference. It is not explicitly stated here, but it is evident that Jesus is the source of our love. Again, He addresses His disciples in this way, "As I have loved you." It is due to His love for us that we are empowered and enabled to love one another.

One writer has correctly pointed out, "Before we can minister in love, we must be mastered by Love." We so often fail in our efforts to love one another because we fail to get back to the foundation of our love. We try to love one another in our own strength and according to our own love and it becomes very difficult.

Before you and I can be overcome in love, we must be overcome by love. We must be assured of the Father's love for us. We must see ourselves as accepted and loved by Him- just as we are. We must operate under the principle of "As I have loved you." It is only as we acknowledge and submit to Christ as a source of love that we will be able to carry out His command of love.

B. The Measure of Love

Jesus then goes on to describe the measure or extent to which this love is to manifest; "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." The way we are to love one another is to be the same as to how Christ loves us.

While they were at the table Jesus quietly got up and performed an act that surprised the disciples. He took on the role of a servant. He took off His outer clothing and wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin and started washing his disciple's feet and drying them with the towel.

Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet. After Jesus had explained to him what He was doing Peter said well then "Wash my hands and head as well." We read on in the Gospel of John and find that Jesus was not only willing to demonstrate His love through acts of servanthood, but His ultimate display of love was His sacrifice on the cross. The disciples were to love each other, the same way as Jesus had loved them through service and sacrifice. "As I have loved you."

To love as Christ has loved us we are to love others by serving. Charles Villiers Stanford says “To love as Christ loves is to let our love be practical and not a sentimental thing.” Loving one another has a lot less to do with talking about love and a lot more to do with showing love. Love is essentially an action. R. Ainsley Barnwell defines love in this way, “Love is forgetting of oneself in the service of another.” To love means stepping out of our self zone and entering into the life of another. It involves becoming vulnerable. It seek the highest good of the one being loved.”

St Augustine pictured love in these words, “Love has hands to help others. It has feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see the misery and want. It has ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. This is what love looks like.” Vincent van Gogh says “I feel there is nothing more artistic than to love people.” Jesus commands us to love one another. To love is to serve.

Another aspect of Christ's love is that we are to demonstrate it to each other is sacrifice. It's going to cost us something to love. It maybe time, money, comfort, reputation or something else. When opening ourselves to others we must realise we may suffer pain, rejection, misunderstanding or abuse.

The measure of our love for one another is the measure by which Christ displays His love to us. “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

3. The Result of Love.

Jesus concludes by telling His disciples what the result of this kind of love would be, “By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The result of Christian loving one another is that the Church becomes the greatest witness to the world without saying one word.

Rodney Pickett says, “Love is the identifying mark of Christianity. In a world of hate, envy and anger, love sticks out like a healthy thumb. When anyone walks away from an encounter with us, that person should remember our love not our convictions.”

William Barclay says, “It is when men see that we are prepared to suffer for the faith which we say we hold, that they will begin to believe that we really hold it. If a thing costs us nothing men will value it at nothing.” The world wants to see Christians living like Christ commanded them to live- loving one another. Not a love comprised of words or emotions, but a love for one another that is willing to spend itself in order that love may be known. The love of Christ is a love of service and sacrifice in which the one loving, looks for the highest good of the one being loved.

Jesus was very concerned that His disciples understand this truth of loving one another as it related to their witness to the world. Jesus was so serious about it that He

says it three times in verse 34. What was their effectiveness as witnesses of the the gospel of Christ? It was their love one for another

Christ's command to his disciples is still the same today. He expects His followers to be active in making disciples of all nations. The way to be making disciples here in Bela Bela is for the town to see that we follow Jesus' command that we love one another as He loved us.

Love for one another is not an option. Love for one another is costly. Love for one another changes the world. When was the last time you told your nearest and dearest that you love them?

Amen