



SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

MESSAGE 2:

LOVE LIKE JESUS

PASSAGE: JOHN 13:34-35 ESV

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message is to emphasize the importance of love within the Christian community as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is love, and who loves us. It aims to encourage a discipleship toward genuine, Christ-like love within the Church.

INTRODUCTION

North African Church Father and Bishop by the name of Tertullian had this to say about the North African Christian Community of his time in his foremost work, *Apologeticus*, that was released in 197 AD: “Vide, inquit, ut se diligunt; et pro alterutro mori parati sunt,” which translates into English: “See, said they, how they love one another, and are ready to lay down their lives for each other.”

When God originally liberated God’s people from oppression in Egypt, God established boundaries for action, which we call laws that ultimately were instructions to help

them live out their calling as a holy nation, a set apart nation, a nation that was distinct from the nations that surrounded them. They found themselves surrounded by idolatrous nations, and their calling from God was to stand as a holy nation, a priestly nation, and a light to the surrounding nations amidst this setting. The key to fulfilling their calling was their obedience to the law. Adhering to God’s laws would make them a distinctive people, contrasting with the surrounding nations. Conversely, failing to adhere to God’s law would result in a misrepresentation of God and His kingdom, a failure to fulfill their divine calling, and a loss of their role as witnesses to God’s nature and God’s design for life. Disobeying God’s laws had devastating implications for their witness, to the extent that choosing to disobey was essentially expressing a preference for an idolatrous lifestyle over a Godly one.

Now all that information provides insight into Jesus’ words regarding the new community he established. To be part of His community, there was an emphasis on a distinctive communal quality and responsibility, embodied in the new commandment presented here in verses 34-35.

At the time that Tertullian wrote *Apologeticus* in which he discussed the Christian Community in North Africa, it was their sacrificial love for one another that

Discipleship

SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

served as a Christian witness to the unbelievers in that area. It was their love for one another that caused the unbelievers to take notice and want to know more about the Christ that they preached about.

Nevertheless, in reflecting on 197 AD and the Christian Community in North Africa versus 2024 AD and the Christian Community here, I've encountered some disturbances. Nowadays, when unbelievers observe the church, you rarely, if ever, hear, "See how they love one another and are ready to lay down their lives for each other." This is problematic because our love for one another is our collective vocation and validation of our identity. Without it, people won't recognize us as true disciples, and without it, we are not to deceive ourselves as if we are true disciples, leading us to the conclusions that if we don't follow this new commandment as a church, as a community of believers, we are not his true disciples. This holds great importance for all of us this morning because concerning this new commandment, it takes two to tango – it takes all of us to tango. We must love each other. This is our assignment, and each of us has a part to play in this. It does not work without each and every one of us.

Interestingly enough, there is a lot of chatter about how the church is to relate to the world, how we might reach the world, and one thing you always hear is love. Matter of fact, you will see on many billboards, church signs, and other marketing materials how the

church is so welcoming and loves everyone, as an invitation for the world to come in. I am not saying that is wrong, but we must look closer at what Jesus is saying here. I am not saying we should not love others who are outside of the church, nor am I saying we should not love anyone for that matter because that would contradict the commandment that Jesus gave us to love our neighbor as ourselves. The issue to be addressed is that we have shifted our focus to being so welcoming and loving to the world out there that we have neglected and overlooked the reality that we don't even truly love each other in the church.

The disorder is evident because in many ways, the church is so caught up in trying to change the world, yet there is no change in ourselves! We are caught up in the wrong cycle of trying to change the world before changing the community, and trying to change the community before changing our community, and trying to change our community before changing our homes, and trying to change the other people in our homes before changing ourselves. This disorder is why we have so much confusion, but when we learn to do things in God's order, everything will fall into place! We always hear about making the world a better place, but what about making the church a better place? How can we truly witness and welcome them out in the world when we don't even welcome each other in the church? How can we expect them to stop backbiting, gossiping, and hating out in the

Discipleship

SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

world if we're doing it in the church? If not careful, we will welcome all these people out there in the world to come into a church where love is absent, and they won't even feel or experience the love that we broadcast we have towards them! However, here is the discipleship shift: we need to start with loving each other in here as Jesus commanded, and as we love each other in here, we don't have to put up all these flags and signs talking about our love for other people, but our love for each other will serve as that testimony and witness to the world of Christ and the love of Christ!

But that's not all; I find something else intriguing about the discipleship of today that must be addressed for the edification of our souls. I find it intriguing that there are so many Professing Christians who speak in tongues, have the gift of prophecy, give to the poor, pay their tithes, sing praises to the Lord, but don't love the Christian people they are in community with! I find it rather peculiar that there are so many Christians who long and pray for the gift of tongues so they can speak in an unknown language but don't even say hello to people when they see them in English! I find it peculiar that there are so many people who identify as Christian but do not love their brothers and sisters in Christ. I find it peculiar that there are so many Christians who go throughout their journeys to serve in ministry, serve in leadership, to teach, preach, to use their gifts, to do good works but skip over the

assignment that Jesus gave us to love one another.

Nevertheless, as we move towards a discipleship shift, let us be reminded of the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians Chapter 13: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, Love bears all things, love bears all things, love bears all things, had to say that a few times, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:1-7).

If you are to truly be a discipleship of Christ, this new commandment is one that you must follow.

SERMON POINT

1. *A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST IS COMMANDED TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIFE FOR OTHERS AS JESUS CHRIST LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THEM.*

Discipleship

SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

Now, I don't know if you're interested at this point, but I can ensure you that this is where it gets more interesting. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Here is where it gets more interesting: Leviticus 19:18, which is a commandment from God, says, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

So the question we must ask is what makes this commandment new? Jesus said, "A 'new' commandment I give you," but this commandment sounds like Leviticus 19:18, so what makes this new?

Are you interested? I hope you are.

Here it is: In Leviticus 19:18, God said to love your neighbor as yourself, but here in John 13:34, Jesus does not tell his people to love them as yourself, as he even said elsewhere, but what makes this commandment new is that Jesus said to love one another as I have loved you!

Whew, did you get that?

Never before had the Son of God come into the world and laid down his life for his

people. This is new! And this new love that Jesus has for us is an introduction to a love that goes beyond making periodic sacrifices for the sake of a good relationship, but the love of Jesus is a love that is sacrificial in nature. The love of Christ is a love that sacrifices not for the benefit of self but for the benefit of others, and Jesus the Christ is telling us that people will know we are his disciples when we love each other the way He loves us! This is new! He sacrificed his life for us, and he calls for us to love each other in such a way that we sacrifice ourselves for each other.

That is the love that should mark a disciple!
That is the love that should mark a Christian community!

That is the love that should mark this church!

If you're truly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are to love your brothers and sisters *in* Christ, as Christ loves you. Notice that I said your brothers and sisters *in* Christ! That is important because if you are truly *in* Christ, then you have His love! You see, to love others as Christ loves you is evidence that you are *in* Christ! If you are truly *in* Christ, you will love others with His love! Now here is another point of discipleship! Disciples of Christ don't love others with their love, but they love others with His love! Here's an FYI, if you are *in* Christ, the love you had to give should be dead along with your old life! If you are *in* Christ, your love should be dead along with your old life!

Discipleship

SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

We are not to love each other with our love because our love has been tainted by sin, has been tainted by hurt, has been tainted by others! Our love is not pure. But when you are in Christ, He introduced you to real love and gave you a new love that is marked by His sacrifice for us!

And that is the love you are to love your husband with!

That is the love you are to love your wife with!

That is the love you are to love your sister in Christ with!

That is the love you are to love your brother in Christ with!

That is the love you are to love your children with!

That is the love you are to love your grandchildren with!

That is the love you are to love others with! Not with your love and not with the world's love, but we are to love each other with the love of Christ!

The world is so confused as it relates to the topic of love, and as you can see, there are so many definitions and interpretations of love. But I am here to tell you that if you want to know what love really is, if you want to know how God defines love, look at Jesus Christ!

Jesus went to Calvary to save a wretch like you and me, that's love! They hung Him high,

they stretched Him wide,

He hung His head,

for me He died.

That's love, that's love.

That's not how the story ends.

Three days later He rose again.

That's love, that's love.

I'm finished now, but greater love has no one than this, that a person would lay down their life for a friend! Beloved, Jesus laid down His life for you, and you are called to do the same for your brother and your sister, for your husband or your wife, for your children and/or your grandchildren!

Lay down your life.

Lay down your pride.

Lay down your ego.

Lay down your agenda.

Lay down your will!

And love others as Jesus has loved you.

QUOTES BY STEPHEN HERROD

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“When we learn to do things in God's order, everything will fall into place!”

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Discipleship

SERMON SERIES BY:
STEPHEN HERROD

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