

John 13:34 Love! Easter 7 / Mother's Day May 8, 2016

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God's grace and peace in Christ your Savior assures you of His unfailing love to you as you trust in Him! We read in John 13:34 some of the parting words of Jesus to the disciples He so dearly loved.

These are Your words heavenly Father to help us love as You have loved us. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, in Christ,

Mother's Day is an appropriate time to describe God's love among us. God wants parents to love their children by being active in their lives and children to love their parents by obeying and valuing them. God wants the whole family to love and help each other! He is pleased when families worship together at church and pray together at home. He loves to see families together at the dinner table followed by a time of family devotion. God wants this kind of love shown at home and also among others! Yet often, people are running in different directions so it is hard to show love. Jesus wanted the disciples & us to set priorities to:

Love!

First, Jesus has the greatest love! He said, *"A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (v. 34) Nothing on earth can match Jesus' love! There are other kinds of love. Mothers show a loving dedication to their children. The world can so turn against a crook, but not a caring mother. It is even more so with Jesus. Jesus didn't stop loving when His family and home town rejected Him. During His ministry, there were times that He was tired and needed rest, but when He saw the crowds He had such love for them that put His own needs aside. His love always motivated Him to put others first in life and in death.

There have been times when a parent may risk his or her life out of love. The parent can get burned in a car fire saving a child, give up a kidney to extend their child's life, or even die saving a family member that they love. How much greater was Jesus' love when He died for people who didn't love Him, but hated Him. He was willing to sacrifice everything to see as many as possible receive His forgiveness by faith and have eternal life. Jesus' love was faultless. He never hated anyone. Jesus' love was perfect. He picked no favorites, but was always ready to lead others closer to God no matter who they were!

God has always wanted people to have a love like His. He wanted Cain to care for Abel, not kill him. Later He said, *"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge..., but love your neighbor as yourself."* (Lev. 19:18) So, if the command to love has been around since creation, why did Jesus call His commandment new? The old command to love was based on God's Old Testament law. The new command to believers is based on the love and the sacrifice of Christ. His perfect love provides motivation for us to love others.

The disciples often didn't show Jesus' kind of love during His ministry. They argued about who was greatest and so that they could avoid serving each other. When they were insulted by friend or foe, they wanted revenge or to hold a grudge. The disciples were more like feuding brothers than loving believers. Yet, Jesus constantly loved them, rebuked them and then forgave them, and guided them so that they didn't focus on themselves but on the will of God the Father who *wants all people to be saved*.

Do the disciples remind us of anyone we know? It's one thing for us to hear *"Love one another as I have loved you."* But, it's another thing to know that commitment and do it. We are to love not just people who love us, but love those who insult us or plan evil against us. When Jesus was insulted, He did not retaliate, but entrusted Himself to God. We need that same kind of love often and consistently!

To show Christ's love, we must first apply His love and forgiveness to us. The more we value Jesus' love the more His love will overflow from us to others. Christ never gives up on us! It may feel like He does at times, but He is only testing us to call us to repent and receive forgiveness and love even more! Remember how Joseph tested his brothers who had hated him and sold him as a slave. When God let Joseph to rule over Egypt's food supply and his hungry brothers came to buy food, he tested them by accusing his spoiled brother Benjamin of a crime to see if the brothers would desert him. Joseph learned that the brothers had repented of their sins of hate. They were not jealous of their father's special treatment of Benjamin. Joseph forgave them and revealed who he was and that God had sent him to Egypt to save the whole family! When we realize our sins against God and each other, we appreciate that Jesus died to take away our sins. We can forgive each other because we know that God has a purpose for us to work together for good.

We shouldn't feel forced to love. We love because of Jesus' love. His love knows no limits. His forgiveness is higher than the sky. His love does just forgive us. It changes us. Paul was changed from one who hated Christians to one who loved them. He wrote, *"I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20) God will do great things through us when we have Christ's love!

Second, His love will make a difference in the world! The other night in the sermon for ascension, I noted that after Jesus went to heaven the disciples changed from fighting among themselves in fear to boldly working together in love. They worked to reach people who had not heard about Jesus as the Savior. Along with their words, they showed love in action. Some enemies criticized the disciple's message of Jesus being the Savior, but they couldn't criticize their acts of love. Jesus had told them, *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (v. 35)

What should loving parents want for their growing children? They want them to grow physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They want their children to become responsible people and to care for others especially one day in their own family. They also want them to trust in Jesus so they know God's eternal love and will experience it in heaven. God also wants children to be His children. So, parents don't just teach God's right and wrong. They also forgive, teach, and love, so children see examples of God's love. Jesus wants that love to extend into our congregation and into our lives among all people. God did not put us on this earth just to demand that people serve us, but that we help each other. The first we have is that all people know and believe in Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection, He restored Peter as an Apostle. He loved Peter if he loved Him. Three times Peter said, Yes. Jesus replied, *"Feed My lambs...."* and *"Take care of my sheep."* (John 21:16) So, our love through God's Word and in actions helps people understand God's love!

God has provided us with the greatest example of love in Jesus. When He commands us to love, He also offers us His love. He shows His love to us through baptism when He calls us to be His dear children. In love, we will want to baptize others. When we receive Jesus' forgiveness in church and through the Lord's Supper, we will evangelize people in our area and get them instructed so they receive His free forgiveness.

I began the sermon talking about family love in Christ and how that carries over into all life. It is that same love that moves us as Christians here to love each other and to work together for Christ. We can make a difference in the lives of others and prayerfully will share the full love of God with them in eternity! God bless each of us and give us strength to be a blessing to our families and to all people! God help us first to appreciate the great love of Christ so that we can make an eternal difference for those we love. Amen.