

John 14:15-21 When We Love Jesus! Easter 6 May 21, 2017

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God's grace and peace to you in the risen Christ, who loved you and gave Himself for you! Amen.

Our Gospel lesson is written John 14:15-21

These are Your Words, heavenly Father. Help us to hear them, believe them, and live in love. Your Word...

Dear Christians, in the love of Jesus,

How would you finish this sentence: When we love someone, we...? You might say: we show love by offering something special to the person, not just gifts but our time and showing kindness. We want to make it our high priority to make the person happy. An example of that selfless love is in Ruth. Ruth was a foreign woman, but she married a Jew who had moved to her nation. When her husband died, Ruth could have returned to her own family. Instead, out of love for her mother-in-law and for God, she left them and her country and returned to Israel to live in poverty and worked like a slave to provide for the basic needs for her family. Her kindness was the talk of the town. Ruth did not just talk of love. She lived it.

Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was the recipient of Ruth's kindness. She responded to Ruth's love with thanks and words of praise. Her life had been so sad due to deaths in the family, but touched by Ruth's love she became happy, secure, and content. She would not have to face problems alone. So it is –

When we love Jesus!

First, Jesus told us to respond to His love by keeping His commands. (v.15) He said, *"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me."* (v.21) As Christians we have two challenges with His words. One is to know what commands are for us; and two is to do them. Jesus told His disciples, *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.... This is my command: Love each other."* (John 15:16-17) John later wrote to all believers, *"He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."* (1 John 4:21)

We may think that it is easy to show love to God. We are showing our love by worshiping: hearing God's Word, singing His praises and bringing offerings to Him. But God demands more: Moses wrote, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."* (Deuteronomy 6:5) That kind of love for God is impossible for us even as Christians and it is just as impossible to have this kind of total love for each other!

This is why the Bible tells us to live by faith in Christ. He loved God and people perfectly. We won't be perfect, but by faith we can show His love. The Bible has examples of people who expressed love by obeying God. Noah built an ark just as God commanded; and it saved his family. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac. Imagine the test he experienced concerning the death his son. After he had waited for 25 years after the promise, now he was to die? Thankfully God intervened to save Isaac. Christ showed an even greater obedience when He humbled Himself and became obedient to death on the cross. God did not intervene because His love for us was so great He gave His own Son as an atoning sacrifice for us!

How can we begin to thank God for His love to us as Jesus commands? **Second, we love when we are blessed by the Holy Spirit.** Jesus said, *"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."* (v.16-17) Unbelievers will never truly know Jesus until Judgment Day. The reason that they will never trust in Jesus is because they have rejected the Holy Spirit who is calling them through the Gospel of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:14) They will remain as spiritual orphans in life (recent play), not understanding God's love, grace, comfort, hope, and glory that Christ won and freely offers them. Their lives will end; but then an eternity of bitterness and pain will follow. This is the judgment for all those who reject the work of the Holy Spirit and don't know Jesus.

But, we have the Holy Spirit, the Counselor. He is the one who stands by us to convince us of the truth. He lives in us. Through Him we believe in Jesus. We know Him as our true Savior. In Him we not only know the love of God, we have it. Paul wrote, *“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in [sins]--it is by grace you have been saved.”* (Ephesians 2:4-5) As God’s loved children, we call on God our loving Father. *“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”* (1 John 3:1) *“Christ’s love compels us.... He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”* (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

With the work of the Holy Spirit we will be motivated to keep Christ’s commands to love God and each other. Examples of such love are in *Luke 7:47* where a sinful woman poured costly oil on Jesus’ feet as He reclined by a table for a dinner. She risked rebuke and expulsion from the house, but her love moved her to honor Jesus. Mary at Bethany sat at Jesus’ feet as He taught, even though it raised the ire of her sister who wanted her to work. (*Luke 10:39-40*) The Apostle Paul, amazed by grace, was ready to die to keep sharing God’s Word. (Acts 21:13) These examples show the work of the Holy Spirit helping believers express their faith in God by their loving actions. That same Holy Spirit is at work in us so that we respond to God’s love. We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit by neglecting God’s Word. We want His Word to guide us to action!

Third, when we love Jesus, it means that we are united with Christ. Jesus promised, *“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”* (v. 18-20) God has not left us to live or to make our way to heaven alone. He is working in us to will to do His good pleasure. (*Philippians 2:13*) We have the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the truth so we are certain of Christ’s blessings forever! A commentator wrote, *“All the love, grace, mercy, light, comfort, joy, hope and glory are offered to us by the Father and the Son.”* (Lenski)

This good news prompted John to write, *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 John 3:2) Paul prayed for believers in Ephesus. Picture him praying for you! *“I pray that ... [God] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (Ephesians 3:16-19) The Bible encourages us: *“Dear friends keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.”* (Jude 20-21)

God’s love for us in Christ is the most amazing news we sinners will ever hear. It moves us to ask, *“Since we want to show our love for Jesus, what can we offer Him?”* As Creator, He owns all good things in the world. Yet, we can offer our thanks, praise and our love. We count it a joy to follow His commands, no matter how difficult it is to love Him or each other. Jesus is our true source of love. Amen.