

John 15: 12-17

“An Unreasonably Reasonable Thing”

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[title slide]

This morning’s message is based upon John 15:12-17, let’s lean in & listen...to God’s word for us this day...

[scripture slides]

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants^[a] any longer, because the servant^[b] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

Let us Pray:

Come, O Holy Spirit, come.

Come as the fire and burn,

Come as the wind and cleanse,

Come as the light and reveal,

Convict us, Convert us, Consecrate us...until we are wholly thine.

And now, Lord, my prayer is simply this:

That the words of my mouth

And the words of all our hearts will be found pleasing and acceptable to you,

for you are our rock and our redeemer...Amen.

[Title slide]

Sermon

If I were asked to boil the gospel – the Good News – the message of God revealed in and through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Christ – it would come down to three words...

[Slide – Love One Another]

Love. One. Another.

It’s the words Jesus spoke to the disciples – his colleagues – his family – his closest friends – on the eve of his betrayal, crucifixion, death, burial - & subsequent resurrection then ascension...

We just read the words in this morning's text - *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15:12)

You may recall that this text picks up where I left off a couple weeks back when we looked at its preceding verses – where Jesus instructed the disciples **then & now** – *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."* (John 15:10)

Our Christian call – which is a call to act like Christ – is to abide...to continue – reside – wait patiently.

Our Christian call to abide in Jesus' love is a call to be enveloped by Christ's love & to envelope those around us in Christ-like love.

Our Christian call to abide in Jesus' love is a call to generously shower that love into our surrounding communities (family, school, work, wherever we are).

The reciprocal nature of this Christian call – that is the call to be loved by Christ **then** to love others in tangible ways – ways which are a result of **& a revelation of** Christ-like love leads us into places of grace whereby we come to know joy – a joy that comes from beyond us & completes us. (John 15:11)

This can feel at times like *An Unreasonably Reasonable Thing*.

Let me explain.

[Slide – two footballs]

Just last week – super bowl Sunday – at high school youth group – I had the students write the following on paper footballs – on one they wrote "God Loves You" – on the other "Love One Another" – my point was that at a kickoff often the receiving team waves for a fair catch – after which the offense comes on the field, and they begin making plays to move the ball forward.

The point, I was trying to make, was, in our Christian walk – we receive the football (the message) that declares "God Loves You."

Then we choose to move the ball forward, and we do so by carrying the one that declares "Love One Another."

We receive God's love – then – we carry God's love into the world by how we love one another.

It sounds reasonable.

God loves us.

We are to love one another.

I kept thinking about that and began to extend it out further, then I had the realization, what do we do when something happens that makes it feel like loving others is an unreasonable ask.

What do we do, in those instances, when it feels like loving others seems possible for other people yet difficult for me / us?

The thing I keep coming back to, is looking to the one who makes this declaration – to Jesus the Christ – it is reminding myself of the context within which Jesus spoke those words...the last supper.

[Slide – Last Supper]

The first disciples to whom these words were declared were Jesus' closest confidants & friends – they were like family to him – & shortly after these words were spoken to the disciples –the people we would think Jesus could rely on...those very same people would desert him; deny him; forsake him; abandon him; hide from knowing him...

Jesus understands what it is to be let down.

And in the moments before Jesus' greatest let down – Jesus declared to disciples **then & now** -
Love one another as I have loved you.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.
Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

Jesus knows love is not easy – & still – Jesus chooses to love.

Now, to be clear, I'm not talking about a love that overlooks heinous actions –
I'm not talking about a love that cheaply doles out grace –

I'm suggesting a love that moves forward with accountability and sustainability –

A kind of love that comes from something outside of us –
A kind of love that can bring life out of death –
A kind of love that can get us through life's deepest griefs and losses –
A kind of love that declares in life – in death – and every moment in between – we belong to Almighty God.

And yet, I'm a realist, I know this kind of love often takes work.

It recalls, for me, a preacher friend who often stood in benedictory fashion and spoke the following words to the gathered community as they stood ready to go – this preacher would raise arms and say,

Love One Another...because...It's that simple & It's that difficult.

Yes, Jesus knows – God knows – what it is to be let down – yet Jesus still holds to the belief that love is actually all around...if we are willing to look for it & work toward it.

[Slide – video clip from Love Actually (2:25)]

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The song on that clip declares, “God only knows where I’d be without you.”

Good thing for us, as Christ followers, we believe in the one who believes in us & promises to be with us always.

And that is why we can love one another – when it is easy...when it is difficult...& every moment in between.

To God be the glory.

Amen and Amen.

Benediction

If we were paying attention today, then we already know what the benediction is...

So, go from this worship time, and be, the people of God.

- + In the name of the Father;
- + and of the Son;
- + and of The Holy Spirit, Amen.