



SERMON
John 15:9-17

Themes: Discipleship, love, calling, obedience, God:Love

The supreme command to love like Jesus

Big Idea

Jesus commissions every one of us to love others sacrificially.

Key Verse

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12 NRSV).

Introduction

Why can't we love like Jesus?

- ◆ We want to love like Jesus. We want to be generous, forgiving and compassionate. We want to be so filled with love that we are able to love people unconditionally. Yet, no matter how hard we try, it doesn't work.
- ◆ How can we love like Jesus?

CONTEXT

- ◆ Abiding and bearing fruit continues Jesus' metaphor of the vine and the branches, so preachers may want to refer back to the beginning of John 15.
- ◆ The love between the persons of the Trinity is both a model and a power. George W. Ramsey in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year B, Volume 2*, unpacks the Greek word for 'as' in verses 9 and 12 (*kathōs*), suggesting that although it can mean 'just as' (ie, a comparison) it can also mean 'since' or 'in so far as' (ie, a cause). The point he makes is that God's love supplies not only the model but also the motive for Jesus' love of the disciples, and Jesus' love for the disciples has the same causative effect.
- ◆ There is a continual tension between love and grace in this passage. 'Love one another' is a command. Indeed, Jesus seems to go as far as saying that the disciples are only his friends if they obey his command. Yet he also says he has already chosen them as friends and has already appointed them to love others sacrificially. There is an intimation of prevenient grace in Jesus' relationship with his disciples.

Key Headings

The supreme command: 'Love one another'.

 **'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you' (John 15:12 NRSV).**

How can love be a command?

Surely love is free and spontaneous; it cannot be forced.

Not a command as much as a natural law

But Jesus' command is not an instruction as much as it is a natural law. In other words, it's the way love works. God loves us. And because God loves us, our loving response to his plans is to keep his commandment. To do anything else is to fight against the way God made the universe and the way he continues to act in it.

Chosen and appointed to love

'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' (John 15:16 NRSV).

Because it's the way God's world works, Jesus is able to choose and appoint us to love other people and to tell them his good news. Each one of us is commissioned for this task.

The key is to remain in God's love

'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love' (John 15:9 NRSV).

The key to all this is to remain in God's love. The love we need to love others as Jesus loves us is found in the inner life of God. The love Jesus shows to his disciples is rooted in his relationship to the source. The love amongst the persons of the Trinity helps us to understand what love truly is.

'We flow into God – and God into us – because it is the nature of love to flow.'

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Richard Rohr, *One with God, One with Each Other*, Centre for Action & Contemplation Daily Devotional, 12 April 2017

When we remain in him, we give ourselves to each other in mutual, loving reciprocity. We show superabundant love that can only come from the source itself.

We are commissioned to love sacrificially

Everyone is commissioned to love

Each one of us is ordained, commissioned and appointed to love others. We are all set apart for special service by Jesus himself. We are each called to go into the world and bear fruit.

The outcome of our commission

Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV:

 **'By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.'**

When we are fulfilling our commission from Jesus, then our lives are marked by the features of Jesus' life. If we examine ourselves before God today and cannot see that we are growing in these things, then we're not abiding in God and we are not fulfilling Jesus' commission.

Loving like Jesus involves sacrifice

 **'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15:13 NRSV).**

Loving like Jesus involves sacrifice. We may not have to die for someone, but we practise sacrificial love in many other ways. Some people will be difficult to love. But we are called to act lovingly towards them anyway:

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centred. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.
What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.
If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.
Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.
In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.
Found on the wall of Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta.

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Accessed from prayerfoundation.org/mother_teresa_do_it_anyway.htm on 12 October 2018

Where are you?

Jesus has chosen you. He loves you and he died for you. Have you made the choice to accept his offer? Do you remain in his love today? It is our choice to make.

Have you accepted Jesus' commission to love sacrificially? Are you growing in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

Is your life bringing God glory? Is it an example of discipleship? In short, are you being obedient?

Will you promise, with me today, to live as one who is loved by God, and through the power of his Holy Spirit, wants to share that love with others?

SUGGESTED RESPONSE SONG:

🎵 SASB 850 - I then shall live as one who's been forgiven