



September 12, 2010  
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## *The One Another Druthers: Love One Another* John 13:34-35; I John 4: 7-10; 19-20;

*Last Sunday Cyndi and I said goodbye to our daughter Rachel and watched as she walked away across the Whitworth campus back to her new dorm room. It was a long, quiet ride home from Spokane as we each processed our emotions. People ask me how we're doing. Bittersweet, I suppose....but it is way more sweet with only a smidgen of bitter. Rachel called Wednesday night when her mom was out so I got to hog the conversation. She sounded so excited and happy and challenged. She was loving her gospel of Mark class and having fun with the activities that Whitworth piles on its freshmen so they won't have time to get homesick. I was so glad to hear the smile in our daughter's voice!*

*So, thanks for asking and caring and praying. It is wonderful and hard and different and great... and everyone is doing fine. Those of you who have been there...you can nod knowingly right now; go ahead. Those who haven't... treasure every moment with those kids. You cannot believe how quickly you'll be loading up **your** car and driving away. And if you choose Whitworth...as nine Gig Harbor kids did this year... they will be in great hands.*

*Two of Rachel's friends gave her one of the best going away presents I have ever seen. It was a pillow with a custom made pillow case. On one side was an iron-on picture of Hannah, a not-to-be-messed-with Texas girl shooting her shotgun. On the other side is a picture of Sherill, a young Israeli woman who served as an officer in the Special Forces, standing there with her M-16. And in between these two imposing pictures were the following words on Rachel's pillow: **"No boys allowed here unless they wish to die by the hands of an Israeli and a Texan."** I couldn't have said it better myself! I don't want her to put that on her bed. I want her to nail it to her dorm room door!*

*It's great to know that I'm not the only one watching out for my little girl. Truly, one of the things I am most grateful for in my ministry here is the fact that my kids...and my wife...and myself... have had a church full of people who were watching out for us and caring for us and going to bat for us. You will never know how much your care for my family has meant to me over the years. And...**by the way**...that is exactly how we ought to be treating one another.*

*In fact, the New Testament is **full of hints** about how we...the followers of Jesus...the Body of Christ...ought to treat one another. 36 times the words "one another" appear with a hint about how **you ought to be treating her**...and how you ought to be treating him...and about how all of you in the balcony ought to be treating everyone down here on the floor and about how all of you at the first service ought to be treating everyone in the second service.*

*36 "one anothers." How many of them could you name? Well...buckle up; I'll give you a quick tour. Ready? Be devoted to one another, honor one another, live in harmony with one another, stop passing judgment on one another, accept one another, instruct one another, greet one another, agree with one another, serve one another, bear with one another, be kind and compassionate to one another, speak to one another, submit to one another, forgive one*

another, teach and admonish one another, encourage one another, **encourage one another daily**, spur one another on toward love and good works, do not slander one another, offer hospitality to one another, clothe yourselves in humility toward one another, have fellowship with one another...and that's only 22 of them! There are 14 more!

We can't cover all of the; we would be preaching the "one anothers" for most of a year. But we can touch on a few of them. So...for the next couple of months, we are doing the "One Another Druthers." We in this Church **can** treat each other any old way we want to...that is our choice. But God would druther we treat each other in certain ways. And if we treat each other the way that God would druther we treat each other, the world will look up on the top of this hill and say, "Look...just look at how Christians treat one another. It is so different from the way the world treats me. So good and life-giving. I want that! I don't know about God or Jesus...but I want to be around people who treat me that way."

But...**is that** what the world says usually about how Christians treat each other? Sadly, no. In fact it has been said of the Church that we are the only army that shoots its wounded. Too often we are mean-spirited and judgmental and quick to condemn and ...well...just brutal toward each other. How about here at Chapel Hill? Well...like I said... the Toones have found this to be a pretty life-giving place. There have been some exceptions...there are always exceptions...church folk that deserve a good spanking for the way they treat their brothers and sisters...but mostly...I think this is a church **that would druther treat each other the way God wants us to.**

Do you want to treat each other the way God would druther we treat each other? Which "one another" should we start with? Well...how about the one that appears ten times in the New Testament, more than any other. How about the one the Jesus used to sum up what it means to be his followers? How about the one that inspired Paul's most beautiful and beloved chapter of scripture...I Corinthians 13. **How about the "one another" that says it all.** What is that one another? **Love one another.** Say it. Now...turn to someone you don't know and say, "God tells me I'm supposed to love you. And you are supposed to love me!" Do it again.

Now you may be obediently turning to complete strangers and uttering these words because your pastor told you to...but a fair question would be, "Why?" Why should I love someone I don't even know? Our first text for the morning tells us why: (Read John 13: 34-35.)

The setting was the Upper Room. This is the last night that Jesus will be with his disciples. Within a few hours, he will be arrested. Within a day, he will be dead. For three years he has been leading and teaching these disciples. But his time is running out. The future of his ministry rests with this motley gathering of young Jewish men. What can Jesus say in these final moments to sum up what he has tried to say for three years?

Well...here it is: John 13:34-35. Circle it! Memorize the address. Because this is the **only time** that Jesus ever commands his followers to do anything. They already had plenty of commands. They had Ten Commandments. And they had hundreds of other commandments to live by, too. In fact, so many that no one could bear the burden of them. **The last thing any Jew needed was one more commandment to obey.**

But Jesus has one. A new one. The Eleventh Commandment. The only time Jesus ever said to his disciples, "I command you to..." And what was that commandment? **"Love one another."** I command you...to love one another. Now if you have a master and he says, "I command you..." ...that's going to make you sit up and take notice, isn't it? "I command you

to love one another." What does that look like, Jesus? What do you mean? He goes on. **"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."** And how important is this, Jesus? This important. **"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

Is Jesus your Lord? Yes or no? **Your Lord** commands you to love one other. In fact, your love for each other should be so obvious and so genuine...that outsiders looking in will say, **"They must be Christians. Look at how they love one another."** Is that what the world says of Christians today? No, regrettably. "They must be Christians, they are so judgmental. They must be Christians, they are so legalistic. They must be Christians, they are so angry." This weekend, the Islamic world is saying, "They must be Christians; they are burning the Koran." Do you think that we have won over even a single Muslim because of this stupid idea? Jesus said, "The world should recognize that you are my disciples because of the way you love each other."

The apostle John never forgot those words from Jesus. Many years later when **he** was writing a letter to **his** disciples, John wrote this: (I John 4: 7-10)

<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

A little farther on, John drives home the point: <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

If you say you love God, but hate your brother or your sister, what does John call you? A liar! If you cannot love your brother who is right in front of you...with skin and bones on... how can you possibly love the invisible God?

Wow. Harsh words! I wonder how many liars we have here this morning? I wonder how many folks here this morning are disobeying the only commandment their Master ever gave them? I wonder how many times this last week we completely faked out the pagans. They listened as we spoke badly about a fellow Christian or gossiped about a fellow Christian or snubbed a fellow Christian or even mistreated a fellow Christian. They would never have guessed we were Christians because we didn't love each other.

But how do we do this? Let's face it: some of us aren't very lovable! A little critical, a little cranky, a little grouchy, a little too liberal or too conservative...a little sour. Just not very easy to love. If you are sitting next to an unlovable Christian, why don't you just raise your hand right now? Is this even fair? The Lord could command us to pray or to give to the poor or to be nice to one another...but how can he command us to **love** one another? How can Jesus demand that we have warm, mushy feelings for each other? After all, isn't that what love is?

That's what the world says it is. Love is a noun. A feeling. You can't choose to feel something; you either feel it or you don't, right? How do I command you to have feelings for me? One of the reasons that Cyndi's love for me is precious is because it is a gift. I can't compel her to love me. She just does. **"Jesus...it's not fair to command us to have feelings for each other. It's not possible."**

*But that's not what this word means. There are Greek feeling words for love. Eros is erotic, sexual love. Phileo is brotherly love...the kind of affection that David had for Jonathan. But there is another Greek love word and I'll bet you know it. What? **Agape**. Agape love is a verb. It is an action. It is not a feeling. In fact, it has nothing to do with feelings. In fact, it often acts entirely contrary to our feelings.*

*Jesus commanded his disciples to **agape** one another as he had **agap'ed** him. How did Jesus **agape** them...and us? He died. He suffered and gave up his life to save ours. Did he feel like doing that? No! In Gethsemane, Jesus knelt, wept, prayed, begged God to let him avoid the cross. But out of obedience to the Father...he **agap'ed** us...he acted in love toward us despite his feeling.*

*Here's a definition of love for you: **Agape love is always seeking God's highest good for the other person.** Agape is choosing to set aside my preferences, my wishes, my feelings, my comfort for the sake of another. **It is choosing other over self. Love is choosing other over self.** Say that. Sometimes **agape** is tender. Sometimes **agape** is tough. Telling the alcoholic that his drinking is killing him doesn't feel very loving; he might even hate you for it. (Believe me, I know what I'm talking about here.) But it is seeking God's highest good for him. And that is love.*

*I cannot do this justice in one sermon. I preached an entire series on I Corinthians 13, the love passage. We don't have time to look at all 10 occurrences of the "love one another" commands in the New Testament. And even if we did, you would forget all that insightful teaching by the time you walked out the doors. But this has to be our starting point for the one-anothers. It was Jesus' only command to us. And if we will not obey Jesus on this one...if we will not choose God's highest good for each other no matter how we might feel about it...then none of the other one-anothers will matter! Because all of the rest flow out of this. IF we love one another...because we love one another... only then will we honor and accept and greet and serve and be kind to and submit to and teach and forgive one another... Because all of the other one-anothers are an expression...and outflow ...of this supreme one-another—love one another.*

*Egypt is a predominantly Muslim country. But about 10-15% of the population are Christians. Most Christians in Egypt are called "Coptic." The Copts are ethnically identical to Muslim Egyptians. You can't just look at an Egyptian and figure out whether he is a Christian or not...unless, that is, you look at his wrist. For centuries, Egyptian Christians have tattooed a cross on their wrists. They are not forced; it is their choice. But in a country where you can be persecuted and even killed for being a Christian, **this tattoo is a courageous and telltale sign that declares openly, "I belong to Jesus."***

*Jesus told us there **ought** to be a telltale sign that we are his. What is that telltale sign of Christian community? A prominent tattoo? No. Love. Love for one another. Not a feeling. A life of agape action that chooses ...that seeks... God's highest good for our brother and sister, whether it feels nice or not.*

*The world doesn't know it, but they are desperate for this kind of love. The love that puts other before self for the sake of Jesus. In obedience to Jesus. This is central to everything else we claim to be and do as the church of Jesus. Without it, nothing else matters. And every one of us will sit here this morning and nod our heads and say, "Yes, we ought to love one another...." **And then, we will walk out of here and forget.** We will go back to business as usual. We will speak poorly of our brother or mistreat our sister ...or just ignore*

them. And so I was asking myself, how can we remember? How can we walk out of here remembering and obeying the command of Jesus to love one another?

Let's go Coptic! No, we don't have 25 tattoo artists waiting for you in the prayer chapel. But we do have this. An ink stamp that says...simply, "Other." When you walk out of here this morning...stick out your wrist to the person at the door. And they will stamp "other" on it. Then...every time you see it...before the soap washes it off...let it be a reminder to you. "Am I loving that sister? **Am I choosing other over self...for the sake of Jesus?**" I hope we run out of ink today. And I hope this temporary tattoo will remind us to obey the Lord Jesus when he says, "I command you...love one another!"

## **SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Pray together.** Take turns reading through the scripture text out loud. Take several minutes to reflect on the passage in silence, circling or underlining meaningful passages. What words or phrases jump out at you? How does this passage speak to your life in specific ways? What one or two things is the Holy Spirit inspiring you to do in your own life? Now, share these thoughts with each other. Don't teach, share and listen! Ask questions of the text and each other. Answer the "So what" question; "so what difference would this make in my life if I took it seriously?"

### **Dig deeper**

1. The Jews already had Ten Commands. Jesus made it 11. What other commands could Jesus have given his disciples? Why this one? And why is it a difficult command for us in today's culture?
2. What does John mean when he says, "God is love?" What does he not mean? Why does I John 4: 19-20 cut us all to the bone? Explain in your life.