

TEXT SERMON – Discipleship Series

Message #4 **“THE ESSENTIALS OF DISCIPLESHIP” Part 2**
John 13:35

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The word essential means: “that which is absolutely necessary; indispensable; basic.” As air is essential for the lungs; as light is essential for the eye and as blood is essential to the heart, so there are essentials for discipleship. If we desire to breathe the air of a higher life, see light in the face of Jesus and have the heart-beat of the Master, it is essential that we follow Him devotedly.

In the previous message in this series the emphasis was upon the first essential for discipleship which is: A Learner Who Is Receptive. Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (Jn. 8:31,32) A disciple is a Learner-Follower in the School of Christ. One who does not have a learner’s heart will not follow.

We come now to the second essential for discipleship which is:

“A LOVE THAT IS REFLECTIVE”

John 13:35

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The setting for this statement by our Master-Teacher is the Upper Room shortly before His crucifixion. He is about to ascend out of this world and go back to heaven. Before He does, however, He is going to give His disciples an assignment – they are to go far and wide propagating the Good News that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

And the way that the world of sinners is going to know that the ones who are His representatives are authentic – is that they genuinely love one another! In a world filled with hate, His love is to be reflected in His followers. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Jesus is saying that the interpersonal relationships of the disciples will prove that they have been changed by the power of God and that power is available to change all who believe in Him!

What are the characteristics of a Love That Is Reflective? First, it is:

I. A LOVE THAT IS DEMANDED.

Let us look back one verse to John 13:34 - "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." And then comes verse 35 - "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

Jesus taught many things, but gave us only one command: “love one another.” There hinges on the little word “as” an equation of divine proportions. Our love for one another, Jesus said, is to equal the quality of His love for us. “Love one another. As I have loved you

so you must love one another.” Jesus commands that we love with the same quality and motive. This is the Jesus kind of love.

He calls this a “new command”. At first glance there seems to be some incongruity between the words “love” and “command.” Therefore, the first question that we have to answer is this: “can love be demanded?” Obviously this quality of love can be demanded for the Lord demands it! The next question is: “Why is this quality of love demanded? There is a three-part answer to that question as follows:

A. This Love Is A Gift From God.

Romans 5:5 - “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Or, as the NIV renders it: “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” God has “poured” His love into us – He has “shed abroad” His love in us. This divine quality of love is a gift.

B. Giftedness Brings Responsibility.

God expects every gift He gives to be used in serving others, not utilized for self-aggrandizement. We are to pour out that which He has poured into us! That which He has “shed abroad” in us is to be shared around with others! We are to be channels not reservoirs.

C. Giftedness Brings Accountability.

There is no responsibility without accountability. We will, one day, be required to give account of our stewardship, even our stewardship of love. God, the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift” (James 1:17) can command us to love because He gave us the gift of His love. Therefore, when Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you,” He expects us to obey.

We see then, that a Love That Is Reflective is a demanded love – it is a different quality of love – a higher level of love that we have received from God and are to lavish on one another.

Illust. A 4 year old girl had learned the phrase, “love one another” in Sunday School. Her mother asked her to explain what the words meant. She replied, “Well, Mom, it’s this way: God is Number One, see, and we are to love God; then we’re supposed to love another one. So, if everybody loved Number One and then loved another one also, everybody would get loved.” She did not have it exactly right but she wasn’t wrong either!

Love That Is Reflective is love that is demanded. In addition, Love That Is Reflective is:

II. A LOVE THAT IS DIVINE

“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

The word “love” is one of the most often used words in the English language. We say we love our spouses, family; cars, dogs, chocolate, sunsets, Grand Canyon, food etc.

and the result is that we become calloused – the word love becomes worn with usage. The English language is limited in “love words”. We have “fond”, “like”, “affection” – but we tend to use “love” for everything we appreciate.

Not so with the Greeks. They had several words for love: “storge”, love of things; “eros”, sensual love between humans; “phileo”, brotherly and family love; “agape”, God-like love. When Jesus said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another”, that is “agape” love, God-like love. It is the love with which we are to love others.

In what ways did Jesus demonstrate this God-like love? In at least three ways:

A. He Loved With A Selfless Love.

No one can honestly say that Jesus was self-centered. His life was a life focused upon others. His life was spent giving His time, attention, energy and even His life for others. He said, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28)

He was on a mission of mercy. His focus was always upon others. Why? He was God and therefore, loved with God-like love! Such love is not self-absorbed but is self-less. It is this very quality of love that He expects of His disciples: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

B. He Loved With A Sacrificial Love.

In John 15:12-13 Jesus repeats what He said in John 13:35 - “love one another” - and then adds to the statement: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Laying down one’s life for others requires a quality of love that is of divine origin. This is not mere human love; this is not Hollywood love; this is heaven’s love! Man’s love has limits, but God’s love knows no boundaries. He has given to us His limitless love which enables us to love as unaided humans could never love.

Illust. Years ago a ship named *The Empress of Ireland* sank, and many passengers were drowned. On her first trip of the summer of 1914 the Empress of Ireland sailed away from her berth in Quebec Harbor bound across the North Atlantic to Liverpool, England. Fate, however, had disaster in store for the *Empress of Ireland* and in a veiling fog another ship, the *Storstad*, collided with the *Empress*, piercing her hull and sending her to the bottom. *The Empress of Ireland* took all but 462 of the 1477 souls on board with her.

Among those who perished were 129 Salvation Army officers. When their bodies were recovered later, not one had a lifebelt! Survivors told how these servants of God had reacted with calmness and courage when informed that the vessel was sinking. There were not enough life preservers to go around, so they bravely removed theirs and gave them to people they felt were not prepared to meet the Lord. Some witnesses told of

hearing those gallant crusaders say, “We know the Savior, so we are ready to die.!”

Those 129 believers were willing to drown so that the unconverted might have the opportunity to receive Christ. They were motivated by the spirit of Him who said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Yet the Savior, being more than a mere man, went even further. Demonstrating His deity, He laid down His life for His enemies!

As we think of His sacrifice which is beyond human comparison, we exclaim with the hymn writer in wonder and admiration, “O What Love!”

“O what love, that He should die for me!
Saving grace thus to supply for me;
O what love! O what love!
Evermore I’ll sing it – O what love!”

C. He Loved With A Steadfast Love.

A touching and revealing statement is in John 13:1 - “He loved them to the very end.” Some of the disciples were not very lovable at times. Neither are we! Nevertheless, He loves us with an unending, never dying love. That’s the way we are to love each other.

His love brought Him from the highest heights to the lowest depths; it is boundless in its circumference and endless in its reach. Since a disciple is a carbon copy of Christ, we should reflect this divine love which is selfless, sacrificial and steadfast.

“Others, Lord, yes, others,
Let this my motto be
That I may live for others
And therefore live like thee.”

Love that is reflective is love that is demanded, love that is divine and, in addition:

III. A LOVE THAT IS DISPLAYED

“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

Jesus certainly displayed His love for us and He calls upon His disciples to put the love that has been poured out in our hearts on public display. We have examples of such displays of love among God’s people recorded in the New Testament. Consider:

A. Past Displays Of This Love.

This quality of love was evident in the lives of the early disciples of Jesus. Tertullian, the early church historian relates that in his day it was said of Christians, “See how they love one another. See how they are ready to die for one another.”

This mutual love among the followers of Jesus can be traced in the letters of Paul to various churches:

- In writing to the church at Thessalonica Paul commented, “Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.” (1 Thess 4:9-10)
- Writing to the Ephesians, Paul referred to their “love to all the saints.” (Eph. 1:15)
- He commended the Colossians for their “love in the Spirit.” (Col. 1:8)

But that was a long time ago. What about the present? Are we cultivating this quality of love in our lives individually and in our churches collectively? Do the unsaved around us sense that we professing followers of Christ are bound together by love? If the world is ever to be convinced of the reality of Christ, then there must be the reality of Christ’s love in the lives of His followers. How, in practical ways, can we reflect Christ’s love?

B. Practical Displays Of This Love.

A quick review of the Love Chapter of the New Testament will refresh our minds about the practical aspects of God-like love:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Cor.13:4-7)

Notice 7 Negatives:

v.4 “it does not boast, it is not proud.”

v.5 “It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

v.6 “Love does not delight in evil”

Notice 7 Positives:

v.4 “Love is patient, love is kind.”

v.6 “rejoices in truth”

v.7 “It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

We see many demonstrations and demonstrators on television and in our streets. The majority of them seem to be demonstrations in opposition to something. What this old world needs is a demonstration of divine love by professing followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SUMMATION

Essential to discipleship is not only A Learner Who Is Receptive but A Love That Is Reflective. This love is demanded of us because it is a divine gift and we are to put this quality of love on display before a watching and love-hungry world!

In our universe we have a sun and a moon. The sun is the source of light and warmth. The moon has no light of its own – it only reflects the sun’s light. In the spiritual universe, the Lord

Jesus is our Sun and we are like the moon – we are to reflect the warmth of His love and His light. This is the mark, mission and ministry of the disciples of the Lord Jesus!

CONCLUSION

Illust. An elderly gentleman prided himself in his ability as an art critic. He was with a group of friends touring an art gallery when he saw a large frame on the wall. He wanted to impress his friends with his knowledge of art and he walked over to this framed piece to explain it to his friends.

He was near-sighted and when he reached for his glasses he discovered that he had left them at home. However, not to be deterred, he began to remark about the poor quality of the image that he dimly saw before him.

He criticized the fuzzy figure that he faintly saw saying that the subject, which was a man, was too ugly to ever be called a good piece of art. He said that the artist had shown poor taste in the way he had dressed the man and he was generally finding fault with everything about it. The man kept going on like this until his wife managed to get near enough to him to whisper to him, “Dear, you are looking in a mirror.” He was quite embarrassed and humbled when he realized he had been criticizing his own face.

We are mirrors. When people look into our lives do they see the love of Christ reflected there or do they see something ugly?

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