

# Exalting Jesus Christ

## "Authentic Love

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. If I were to ask you to identify the quality that distinctively sets Christians apart as children of God, what would your answer be?
  - A. In other words, what is the true mark of a believer in Jesus Christ?
    1. No doubt, there are several ways one could answer that question.
      - a. Some would probably say the true mark of a believer in Jesus Christ is obedience – being obedient to the gospel of Christ by being scripturally baptized – immersed in water for the remission of sins.
      - b. Others might say the mark of a Christian is being separate and distinct from the world – living godly lives that are beacons of light in a dark and sinful world.
      - c. Still others might say being a Christian means living a life of service – of giving ourselves to serve the spiritual, emotional and material needs of others.
      - d. And, some might even say the true mark of a Christian is faithfulness – faithfulness in attendance, faithfulness in Bible study, faithfulness in sharing the gospel with others.

2. The list of possible answers is truly endless.
- B. While all these answers are good, I don't think they capture the true essence of what it means to be a believer – a disciple of Jesus Christ.
1. I believe the true mark of the Christian is love – because without love there would be no obedience, there would be no life of unique service, and there would certainly be no faithfulness.
  2. In his commentary on the gospel of John, Arthur Pink wrote, "Love is the badge of Christian discipleship. It is not knowledge, nor orthodoxy, nor fleshly activities, but (supremely) love which identifies a follower of the Lord Jesus. As the disciples of the Pharisees were known by their phylacteries, as the disciples of John were known by their baptism. . . so the mark of a true Christian is love; and that, a genuine, active love, not in words but in deeds."
- II. As we continue our studies of the gospel of John, entitled "Exalting Jesus Christ," we want to focus on the last eight verses of John chapter 13.
- A. Because it's here that Jesus gives His disciples a mandate that adds a new dimension to the meaning of love.
1. And what we will discover in these verses is not only a new dimension on love that will change our lives in a very compelling

way – if we truly understand it – but will also show the world that we truly belong to Jesus Christ.

2. It's in these final verses of John chapter 13 that we learn the meaning of real "Authentic Love."

**BODY:**

- II. As the scene opens, we find ourselves in the upper room where Jesus and His disciples have been celebrating the Passover meal.
  - A. It was during this supper, according to other gospel accounts, that Jesus paused to institute what we now call the "Lord's Supper."
    1. It is a memorial that would be celebrated by His disciples for all time in memory of His death, burial and resurrection.
      - a. We celebrated that memorial this morning, just as Christians throughout time have done on the first day of every week.
  - B. It was also during this supper that Jesus identified His betrayer – Judas.
    1. But what was so remarkable about that moment is that Jesus did it in such a manner that no one else knew who the betrayer was – only Jesus and Judas knew.
    2. And Judas left the room that night knowing the Lord knew he would betray the Savior to His enemies in the matter of just a few short hours.

C. However, as the night continues, Jesus takes advantage of this intimate setting to encourage His disciples one last time.

1. His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane is only hours away, and so is His suffering and crucifixion on the cross.
2. Before the sun sets again, the body of Jesus will be laying in a borrowed tomb.
3. Therefore, Jesus takes time to share some final thoughts with His disciples – and in particular, He discusses two main topics in the last eight verses of John chapter 13.
  - a. He tells His disciples that He will depart soon.
  - b. And He leaves them with the greatest of all commandments.

II. As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus turns His attention to the task of preparing His disciples for His own departure.

A. Although Jesus had repeatedly warned His disciples that the chief priests and elders were seeking His life, these eleven men had no idea Jesus was about to be taken and crucified.

1. John tells us: **John 13:31-32** – *So, when he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately."*

2. Did you notice that five times in these two verses Jesus uses some form of the word "glorify"?
    - a. For Him, death would not be a mournful tragedy but a magnificent triumph. It would be glorious, not gruesome.
    - b. This is how one would look at death if they're seeing it from heaven's perspective.
  3. **Psalm 116:15** – *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*
    - a. That's how God sees the death of His saints – precious.
    - b. The word used here by the Psalmist describes something of immense worth and value, and of incredibly priceless beauty.
    - c. The death of a faithful saint is a time of celebration – a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving for a life lived glorifying God.
- B. Jesus knows that His teaching here is difficult for His disciples to completely understand, so He patiently and lovingly reassures them as a parent would reassure their own troubled children.
1. **John 13:33** – *"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you."*
  2. Jesus no longer tries to cloak His message in mystical shades of meaning, but speaks very clear and plain.

3. And in doing so, He presents His puzzled disciples with three hard facts they will have to face.
  - a. First, Jesus tells them His departure is imminent: *"I shall be with you a little while longer."*
    - (1). The moment had finally come when Jesus must leave.
  - b. Second, Jesus said they will look for Him, but won't be able to find Him: *"You will seek Me."*
  - c. And third, the reason they won't be able to find Him is because Jesus will be going to a place where they will not be able to go – at least not immediately: *"Where I am going, you cannot come."*
- C. There is a distinct finality in the words of Jesus, which poses an enormous problem for His disciples – how will they go on without Him?
  1. With Jesus gone:
    - a. Who will guide them as He had done these past three years?
    - b. Where will they go for answers?
    - c. How will they be able to maintain their unique identity as disciples of Jesus the Christ – the Messiah?
    - d. How will they manage to carry on His message, and complete His work?
  2. Try to imagine what it would have been like to be there at that moment and hear the Savior say these words.

- a. Just imagine how empty and worried you would feel.
- b. Now you know what those men were feeling.

III. Knowing how insecure His disciples were feeling at the moment, Jesus gives them a unique command – a new command – to help encourage and stabilize them.

A. This command not only presents a whole new and fresh dynamic to an old command, but it promises to produce an incredibly unique and new outcome.

1. **John 13:34-35** – *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

2. The word used by Jesus in verse 34 to describe "love" is the word "agape."

- a. Of the four Greek words for "love", this one is the capstone – it speaks of the highest, greatest, purest, and most intense form of love known to humankind.
- b. This type of love refuses to respond negatively, it refuses to reject, it refuses to demand conditions, and it refuses to nitpick at the human flaws in someone's soul.

B. Oddly, there is nothing new about the command to love.

1. The Old Testament is filled with commands concerning love – here are just a few:
  - a. **Deuteronomy 6:5-7** – *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*
  - b. **Deuteronomy 11:1** – *"Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always."*
  - c. **Leviticus 19:18** – *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*
  - d. **Leviticus 19:34** – *The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*
  - e. **Proverbs 10:12** – *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins.*
  - f. **Proverbs 17:17** – *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*



g. **Ecclesiastes 9:9** – *Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.*

C. However, the command Jesus gave His disciples here in John chapter 13 is unlike any command to love that has ever been given.

1. **John 13:34** – *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

a. Jesus doesn't simply command His disciples to *"love one another"* – it goes much deeper than that.

b. He commands those who would be His disciples to *"love one another; as I have loved you"* – meaning we are to love one another in the same way Jesus loves us.

(1). We are to measure our love for one another by the standard of Jesus' love for us.

(2). We are to love one another the same way He loves us, to the same degree He loves us, with the same grace and mercy with which He loves us, with the same sacrificial love with which He loves us, and with the same purity and holiness with which He loves us.

2. We need to stop simply loving one another, and start loving one another as He has loved us.

- a. That degree of love will forever change our relationships with one another – we will never see one another the same again.
  - b. When we learn to truly love one another as He has loved us, our love for one another will be deeper, stronger, and purer than it has ever been – and nothing will ever separate us.
- D. And, as Jesus said, when we love one another as He has loved us the outcome will be incredible:
- 1. **John 13:35** – *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
  - 2. No one will be able to ignore this authentic love – nothing is more impressive than real, genuine, unselfish, self-sacrificing love.
    - a. Everyone will "know" that we are the Lord's disciples.
    - b. This isn't some theoretical knowledge, but real first-hand knowledge of seeing the Lord's love in action through our own lives, and in the way we treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.
    - c. But even more so, the world will know we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ by the way we show them love.
    - d. The world will know we are His disciples by the way we love those in the world with the same pure, genuine, unselfish, self-sacrificing love Jesus demonstrated when He gave Himself to die on the cross for the sins of the world.

3. There is nothing that will prove to the world that we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ than by loving others as Jesus has loved us.

IV. Unfortunately, as Jesus said these wonderful words, His disciples seem to hear only the first part – the fact that Jesus would depart soon.

A. Those words of Jesus hit Peter like a ton of bricks – and as a result, he seems to have completely missed the new commandment.

1. Look closely at Peter's remarks:

- a. **John 13:36-37a** – *Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward." 37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now?"*

2. From his remarks, it's obvious that Peter is not only interested in knowing where Jesus is going, but also worried about being left alone.

3. And so, in a moment of impulsive sincerity, Peter declares his undying allegiance to Jesus.

- a. **John 13:37b** – *"I will lay down my life for Your sake."*

B. But as sincere as Peter was, and as strongly as he believed he would be willing to literally lay down his own life for Jesus, the Lord knew Peter better than he knew himself.

1. Peter had no idea what lay ahead – he had no idea that in a matter of just a few hours the Lord would be taken captive, condemned to die and finally be crucified on a Roman cross.
  2. Although Peter was so sure of his allegiance and deep devotion to Jesus, the truth was he wouldn't be able to stand up to a test of his faith that was coming.
    - a. **John 13:38** – *Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times."*
- V. From this wonderful passage, there are three great truths about how our love should be expressed to other Christians – to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- A. First, authentic love is unconditional in its expression.
    1. There are no "ifs" attached to authentic love – no threats, and no demands.
    2. Think about this.
      - a. Do you exhibit unconditional love to others – especially to your brothers and sisters in Christ?
      - b. Do you exhibit unconditional love to members of your own family – to your husband or wife, your children, your own brothers and sisters, or your parents?

3. Or could it be that you withhold your love until others have lived up to your standards – until they have managed to prove themselves worthy of your love?
  4. Do they feel unconditionally loved, or do they feel they're constantly trying to gain your acceptance.
  5. Is your love expressed unconditionally?
- B. Second, authentic love is unselfish in its motive.
1. Remember Paul's words:
    - a. **1 Corinthians 13:4-5** – *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy. . . does not seek its own. . .*
  2. Love doesn't manipulate to get its way.
    - a. It places the needs of others before its own needs – it always looks out for number two rather than for number one.
    - b. **Philippians 2:3-4** – *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*
  3. How about you?
    - a. When you show love to others, is it weighed in the balance of what you will get in return?
  4. True love – Christ-like love – gives, with no thought of getting anything in return.

5. Is your love unselfish – willing to give, even when you receive nothing back in return?
- C. And finally, authentic love is unlimited in its benefits.
1. When you love unconditionally and unselfishly, you always walk away the winner.
    - a. Not only are others built up and encouraged, but so are you!
    - b. Of course, when you love this way you become vulnerable.
    - c. But if you never step out on a limb with people, you'll never grasp the fruit of nourishing relationships.
  2. C.S. Lewis in his book "The Four Loves" wrote:
    - a. "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully around with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."
  3. Who would want to live that kind of life?
    - a. Love is meant to be shared and to be given freely – because when we do, we receive the greatest benefits of all.

- b. We benefit from knowing we are loving others in the same way as Jesus loves us.

## CONCLUSION:

- I. There is no greater example of true unconditional love than the love God has for you and me.
  - A. I read this passage in the previous lesson, but I want to repeat it here because it is so fitting.
    1. **Romans 5:6-11** – *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*
    2. The only way God could truly demonstrate His love for us is for Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners.
    3. Jesus didn't wait for us to prove ourselves or our worth – He gave His life on the cross because His love for you and me was unconditional.

B. But there's something else about God's love that is so wonderful –  
God's love for us is eternal.

1. **Romans 8:31-39** – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*

*Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. There is nothing that can drive a wedge between us and the love God through Christ has for each of us – it is eternal.

3. But that doesn't mean we can take advantage of God's love.



- a. Even though nothing can separate us from the love of God, our sins can separate us from God – our sins can sever the fellowship we have with God simply because God cannot have fellowship with unrighteousness.
  - b. How sad it will be for God to send those of us He loves to eternal torment simply because we thought we could take advantage of God's unconditional and eternal love and live a life of sin.
- II. Don't despise the incredible gift of God's love – the gift of God's love expressed through Jesus on the cross.
- A. Jesus said: **John 14:15** – *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."*
    - 1. If you have never come to Christ in obedience to the gospel, then show your love for Jesus today by keeping His commandments to repent and be baptized into Him for the remission of sins so that He can then add you to His church.
    - 2. And if you have not been faithful to the Lord as His disciple, then show your love for Jesus today by keeping His commandments to repent of your sins and confess them to God so that you can once again be restored as a true, faithful disciple of Christ.