

INI - SDG

1st Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2010
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: John 15:9-17 *“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”*

Theme: THE INSEPARABLE BOND OF LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

Dear fellow redeemed, beloved of the Lord and friends of Jesus,

What is the closest bond of love that you can think of? Maybe the bond of love between husband and wife? But husbands, let’s be honest we have not always loved our wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Nor have we always dwelt *“with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life.”* (1 Pt 3:7) Instead of dwelling with them with understanding we can be short with our wives and even annoyed at times because it seems like they are unable to understand something that seems simple to us. The selfishness of our sinful nature has affected the love we have for our wives.

And wives, while you love your husband, that love wanes at time as well. Have you willingly and lovingly submitted yourself to your husband even as you do to the Lord? He may make it difficult for you to do so. Sometimes that man seems so insensitive to what you need. He doesn’t listen when all you want is someone to talk to. And he even seems childish at times. And so you do not give him the respect which the Lord speaks of. The selfishness of sin has affected how you treat your husbands.

Well, what about the bond of love between a parent and their child? This too is a close bond, but it is likewise has been affected by sin. Parents discipline their children because they love them and want to teach them right from wrong. But how often do you discipline your children IN love and not out of anger? Children, you love your parents but how do you show your love? By honor, serving, and obeying them and giving them love and respect? Or by being told to do something several times and then whining and complaining about it? Not even the bond of love between parent and child is perfect.

There is no greater bond of love in the whole universe than that which is between God the Father and God the Son. There we find perfect love. Can we even begin to describe what love

the Father has for the Son and the Son for the Father? At the end of verse 10 Jesus says, ***“I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”*** Jesus abides in His Father’s love by keeping His commandments - by doing everything His Father says. Here we begin to see just how inseparable love and obedience are.

How could it be any other way? How could Jesus say, “I love the Father” and do the exact opposite as His Father commanded? It’s impossible. We can’t even imagine Jesus doing that! No, Jesus’ love for the Father is seen in what He did. It was the Father’s will that His Son come to earth, suffer, and die for the sins of the whole world. The Son loves the Father and came here willingly.

Consider just how much Jesus loved the Father. We see it in the Garden of Gethsemane, don’t we. There Jesus opens His heart for us to see. He knew the horrible suffering that awaited Him in the coming hours. His anguish was so great that He said His soul was sorrowful unto death and His sweat was like drops of blood. He prays to His Father that if it is possible that this cup of suffering be taken from Him. But then what does Jesus add? “Not My will, but Thine be done.” And when the betrayer came with his band of soldiers, Jesus knew the answer. There was no other way for the Father’s plan of salvation to be accomplished than for Jesus to suffer and die on the cross. Jesus loved the Father and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. So we see in Jesus that love and obedience cannot be separated.

We see the same with the relationship of the Father to the Son. Jesus says in the first verse of our text, ***“The Father loved Me.”*** We know this to be true as well, don’t we. We know the Father loves the Son. The Father said so at Jesus’ baptism and at His transfiguration. ***“This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*** (Matt 3:17 & 17:5) And this love is likewise bound closely together with obedience. Though Jesus in His humility never demanded anything of the Father, the Father always heard the prayers of His beloved Son and acted accordingly. The night before His death Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him. The Father heard His Son and did so by raising Jesus from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in heaven. You see, love and obedience cannot be separated.

There is no doubt about the love that exists between God the Father and God the Son. It is a perfect love that showed itself in perfect obedience. Knowing that, consider what Jesus says about His love for us, ***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you.”*** The perfect love that God the Father has for God the Son, is just as great and just as perfect as the love God the Son has for us!

But what could Jesus do to prove His love for us? ***“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*** What greater thing could Jesus do for us than to die for us? To give His very life for us? This is the great love which Jesus has for us by dying for us to rescue us from the flames of hell! Jesus loved us so much that He would give His very life to save our souls! There is no greater example of love in action than this!

Consider how amazing it is that Jesus would call us His friends. We who have not always appreciated Him. We who have taken His love and His sacrifice for granted. He has made us His friends and revealed the will of God to us. ***“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”*** A servant blindly follows his master’s orders, unaware of his master’s final plans. He simply does what He is told to do. Not

so with us and Jesus. Through the Word of Holy Scripture Jesus has revealed to us the whole will of the Father. ***“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”*** It brought Jesus great joy to do the Father’s will. That joy of Jesus remains in us as we know God’s plan of salvation and His purpose for our lives. More on that in a moment.

Jesus continues to expand on His love and personal interest for us, His friends. ***“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”*** The choice to be a believer, a follower, a friend of Jesus was not our own. Rather Jesus in His love chose us. He chose us to be fruitful followers. Followers who can pray to the Father in His name and know that because the Father loves the Son, the Father will hear us and give us only those things which He knows will be good for us. Jesus’ love for us is just as grand and glorious as the love the Father has for Him.

So we come to each one of us. How about our love for the Son? I have heard several people and several churches say they love Jesus, but they do not obey the words of Jesus. And here we are not talking about those Christians who sin and are repentant for their disobedience. We are talking about those who know the Word and will of Jesus and refuse to do what He says. Can that be love for Jesus? Well listen to the words of Jesus Himself. ***“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.”*** Love and obedience are inseparable. How can it be any other way? Can someone honestly love God, but totally disregard everything God says to that person?

Love and obedience are an inseparable bond. It is true, sometimes children listen to their parents because they are afraid of the punishment they might receive. So obedience can flow from discipline and fear. But fear and discipline do not always result in obedience, we see that with the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai. But love and obedience do always go hand in hand. Jesus chose us to be His own children by faith. And that faith which the Holy Spirit has worked in us is a living, active faith. Faith which finds joy in running the way of God’s commandments. (Ps 119:36) Faith which longs to know what Jesus wants us to do. As Jesus says, He ***“appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”*** This fruit results from faith and love for Jesus. These fruits of faith are keeping the commandments of Jesus, even as Jesus kept His Father’s commandments. In doing so, we abide the love of Christ. Love and obedience are inseparable.

The fruit of our faith is seen in how we treat the word of God and how we treat our fellow believers. ***“This is My commandment,”*** Jesus says, ***“that you love one another as I have loved you.”*** Love our fellow Christian as Jesus loved each one of us. Love them in such a way that you would be willing to lay down your life to save your fellow believer. Easier said than done right? After all, some of our fellow believers really rub us the wrong way. Some of them are very short with us and unfriendly. Some of them are nit-picky. Some of them are very hard to love.

But what is our problem when with think this way? We are focusing on their sins and their short-comings. Yet Jesus would direct our focus to Him and His love for you. Do you think you were lovable for Jesus? Do you think your sin rubbed Jesus the wrong way? Yet what did Jesus do? He laid down His life for us to save us. That is love! And now Jesus says, love one another as He has loved us.

So what is the closest bond of love you know of? The bond of love between God the Father and God the Son, between God the Son and the Christian, and between two believers. Love that is seen in what it does. Love that willingly and joyfully obeys. May God the Holy Spirit ever help us, that we may willingly and joyfully obey the will of our Savior even as He willingly and joyfully obeyed the will of the Father. May the Holy Spirit increase our faith that we may love one another even as Jesus has loved us. May God the Holy Spirit ever help us to abide in the love of Christ. Amen.