



THE THREE LOVES

The signs of Christian maturity

Title: The Love that Gives and Receives
Series: The Three Loves
Part 3 of 3

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Pre-Message: Greeting as I come up

Mention it is good and nice to have Jeremy and Katrina Kitchen back

The Three Loves

Two weeks ago Pastor Verner and I began a series, *The Three Loves*, where we tried to get to **the bottom line** of faith in Jesus. What is it that God really is looking for. It began with a passage when a religious teacher asked Jesus how he summarized the bottom line of the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament)

Matthew 22:34–40 & Mark 12:28-31 (NRSV)

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and all your strength.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Over the past two weeks we have talked about how Jesus summarizes the entire Law, the commands found in the Law and Prophets of the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament) in two related commandments.

The Greatest Commandment

First is love the LORD your God with all your heart. Jesus says that we are to be fully devoted to the one true God, creator is the foundation of everything.

Secondly, and it is related is to Love your neighbour as yourself. Jesus then expands



the definition of neighbour to include all people, not just those who are like us, as some of the rabbis in Jesus' day would have said.

Pastor Verner used the illustration of a bicycle to say how these two commands structure how we relate to God and the world around us.

So why three loves?

So isn't that it, isn't that the bottom line? These two explicitly linked commands of love are often presented as the Cliff Notes understanding of what is essential to the Christian faith. "love God, love your neighbour" is that all there is to it.

I don't think so. First we need to see what the question Jesus was answering was, "What is the greatest commandment in the Law."

Jesus was a Jewish teacher, and often answered questions about the law, and this was a question about the Hebrew Scriptures. He even took the laws to the next level, going to the heart in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

But in the gospel of John, we find that Jesus does something that is remarkable, he gives a new commandment. (first realize you don't add to God's law, well unless you are claiming some pretty significant authority, which we as Christians say he does).

The New Commandment

Jesus had given the teaching on the greatest commandment after Palm Sunday, during his last week of ministry, but then at the Last Supper, the night before he is crucified Jesus says these remarkable words.

John 13:34–35 (NIV84)

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

“One Another”

This command (in light of not replacing the previous two) are what identify us as the true followers of Jesus.

JESUS' FOLLOWERS FORM A COMMUNITY OF MUTUAL LOVE

The key word in this passage is ‘one another’.

- It is different than loving everyone and not receiving love in return (doormat)
- It is different than expecting to be loved, without a desire to love in return (self-centred)
- It is a mutual love, a love that gives and receives, it is the love that requires and creates community.

‘Jesus didn’t create a church’

This is where the thought that we can love Jesus but not love ‘the church’ really rubs up against Jesus’ teaching. You cannot do ‘one another’ love by yourself, it requires others. The church needn’t look like pews in a building, as there are churches of many shapes and sizes, but in Jesus own words we are called to be a community of mutual love, and this will be the mark that his teaching is true.

And the standard is not to love ‘as you love yourself’ but to love ‘as I have loved you’

What Does It Look Like to ‘love as I have loved you’?

It Looks Like Service

Just before Jesus gives the new command, he washes his disciples feet.

John 13:14–16 (NIV84)

¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

We are to serve one another.

It Looks Like Sacrifice

John 15:12–13, 17 (NIV84)

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends... ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Jesus teaches us that love involves willing to feel pain, to give selflessly of ourselves for each other.

It Looks Like Compassionately Providing for Each Other

1 John 3:11, 17-18 (NIV84)

¹¹ This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another... ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity [compassion] on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

The Three Loves Are Essential

Love the LORD your God - Love your neighbour as yourself - Love one another

Where churches go wrong is when they only get two of the three:

- Love the LORD & Love neighbour (missing one another)
 - Righteous people without sense of community
- Love neighbour & love one another (missing love the LORD)
 - Become a service club, without the power of the gospel
- Love God & Love one another (not love neighbour)

- Inward focused, isolationist religion.

But what happens when we have all three

Our world is looking for a people

- With sincere convictions about God and life
- Deep love and respect for all people, treating everyone with dignity and compassion
- A community that demonstrates a sincere sacrificial, serving love towards each other.

This is what church should be, what church can be. It is what made the early church, even with its own faults in its age, an irresistibly attractive force in its time.

And it all begins with Jesus.

1 John 3:23 (NIV84)

²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

It begins with a belief in the name of Jesus, the one with the authority as God to give a new command.

And then we build our lives on his love.

Conclude with song, "build my life"