

Reading: John 15v9-17

Theme: Knowing and showing Jesus' love.

Last time we saw 3 main things from v9-11 - the greatness of Jesus' love, that it was as the love of the Father to the Son; that the Son loves us in the same way. We saw the claims of such love - to remain in that love, delighting in it and showing such by our loving obedience to our Saviour's commands. We also saw the outworking of such love - the Saviour's joy is to be known and experienced in our lives and situations. Let's move on to look at v12-16, but keep in mind v9-11 as our context, for v12-16 follow on from what the Lord Jesus has already said. I will use 3 headings to look at this passage:

1. Exercise the grace of brotherly love.

The Lord Jesus laid before His disciples and us, the great love He has for His people. It the same as the love of the Father for the Son. He loves us with that same fullness and intensity - even at this moment. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us and we are to remain in, consciously delight and enjoy the awareness of that love and are to obey His commands.

It seems so general, yet it involves all the commands, teaching of the Lord Jesus, but here Jesus emphasises and restates again the duty, the grace of brotherly love and draws our attention to the fact it is to be exercised **as He has loved us**. The Lord Jesus, after the great things He has just taught, points His disciples and us to this reality - show the love we have from Him, by the practical exercising of the grace of brotherly love each to the other.

It is a practical test for us all to apply to our lives and we are to look into the mirror of God's word for our lives, rather than use God's word as a microscope to examine the lives of others! Is this evidence of the outworking of brotherly love present in our lives because we love Jesus and want to be like Him? Such an exercise of the grace of brotherly love is expected by Jesus. He looks for it above and beyond many words, deeds and self-assertions.

We are to copy Him in the intensity and extent of His love. That is a tall order and we will never be able to conform to or match it, but our Lord Jesus lays it before us as our pattern to follow, to live by and be motivated by. Christ's love is beyond ours in its infinite value, in its divine perfection, its substitutionary character, its redemptive consequences and outworking; for we cannot die to save the eternal soul of anyone, nor can we, mortal, finite creatures say we have loved as the immortal, infinite Son of God, but we are to base the pattern of our love for each other upon His love for us. Yet we are to have the same attitude of self-sacrificing love; are to view other believers as precious to our Saviour and regard and treat them as precious to us.

Here is the motive and manner of loving each other - as Christ has loved us. In 13:34 Jesus gave it as a new commandment. There He had told them of His going away, of being glorified and glorifying the Father. In the light of His self-sacrificing love, they were to love one another as He loved them. Yet here, it is in the context of Him being loved by the Father, His loving them with the same love, of their needed obedience to remain in His love, of His joy being made perfect in them. We learn that an essential part of and outworking of all these

things - there needs to be the exercise of the grace of brotherly love - love to one another as believers. The word Jesus uses is 'agape' - the word so often used of the love of God, a love that doesn't look at merit, or worth, or standing, but is a love that is constant and consistent.

We are not to downgrade this word "love" to mean friendliness or kindness. The Lord Jesus expects self-giving love one to the other and for the other's benefit, good and development. The weakest, most defective, most awkward or angular believer is not to be despised. All are to be loved with an active, self-denying, self-sacrificing love. If we cannot or will not do it, or will not try to do it, then we disobey the command of the One who we say we love.

This command is to cause us all much heart searching. This command condemns pride, arrogance, standoffishness, self-seeking, divisiveness, individualism, ill temperedness in each and every believer. We are to be willing to lay down our lives for those who are our fellow believers and friends - as v13 says and shows that the love of friendship, the proof of that love, is ultimately shown in laying down our lives for them. We are to remember the context is that of loving other believers and the context is not direct service for the Lord, or gospel proclamation, but loving those we call brothers and sisters, called friends. We are to love them enough to voluntarily lay down our lives on their behalf, whether that is literally or in serving them.

We are not to have a romantic, rose tinted view of this, but see we lay down our lives in the nitty-gritty of self-sacrificing love, that we keep on loving and serving even when it hurts

or is inconvenient. It will also involve the laying down of our reputation, ease and comfort in loving service for other believers.

The Lord Jesus speaks of the exercise of the grace of brotherly love. It is an area we need to consider well and prayerfully, but then move on to practically work it out in our lives as obedience leads on from this and shows:

2. The relationship between Christ and true believers.

In v14-15 the Lord Jesus says amazing things. Here Jesus speaks of the close and even familiar character of the relationship He had brought them into with Himself. These disciples were no longer to think of themselves only as His servants, as honourable as that was, but they were to regard themselves as His friends. He called and gave them this great privilege and honour.

Incredibly, here is God the Son, in His humanity and He calls this ragtag and bobtail group of men His friends and spoke of making everything He learned from His Father known to them! When the Lord Jesus says this, He is not speaking of the infinite knowledge of the Father, nor of the secret will of the Father, but things necessary for them to know, especially the things necessary for the salvation of mankind, so that they might tell and declare it to others.

Here is an encouragement for us too. We are not only Jesus' servants, but His children, His friends. This is incredible, the Lord of glory owns you and me as His friends. Imagine Prince Charles or William was to come to Doncaster and he is making a speech and then says "*It is lovely to see my dear friend...*" and our name is mentioned! Imagine the kerfuffle

as he tells the local dignitaries to make room for you next to him at the meal prepared in his honour. People would view us very differently after that!

Yet the King of heaven, the Prince of peace, calls us His friends and wants us to spend time with Him often. What an encouragement to meet with Him in prayer and in His word - both as individuals and as a church. Here is the source of comfort for us in our lives *“I have a friend, whose faithful love, is more than all the world to me...”* *“What a friend we have in Jesus...”*

The Bible tells us there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother – pointing us ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know if we are a friend of the Lord Jesus? It is by our obedience to Him. Our obedience does not make us His friend, but such obedience **characterises** the friends of Jesus.

Yes, we are to regard ourselves as bond slaves and servants of the Lord Jesus. To serve and work for Him - we are to do so out of the motivation of being counted by Him as His friends and He ours. In a sense, we are to tremble to take that title to ourselves - the apostles never did in their formal writings, but write *‘slave, servant’* of the Lord Jesus. Yet we, at the same time, are able to delight in such a high privilege of the measure of His love toward us.

In OT only Abraham is called *“the friend of God”*. About Moses it was written and said that God spoke to him as a friend with a friend, but in NT the newest believer has the privilege and honour of being *“friends of Christ”*. How often has it been said of a stranger *“If you’re a friend of... then you*

are a friend of mine!” Those of us who are in church, just take a look around and see friends of the Lord Jesus - other believers and we are to be their friends and love them as He loves us.

We are to listen to and read His word. Here is our heavenly Master and best Friend speaking to us. What He wants us to know and do is in His word. No other revelation, no new messages, for His word is complete and sufficient for all areas of our faith and life. I would hope that we are prepared to listen to our dearest Friend and do so eagerly. It is an incredible thing that we are called and classed as His friends, but He has purposes in such and so we see:

3. Chosen for fruitfulness.

The Lord Jesus addresses initially and primarily the apostles in v16. He took the initiative in this relationship. He took the steps to bring this relationship about and the privileges involved, contained within it. All they are, have and are to do, is traceable and attributable to His grace and nothing of any merit or deserving in them. He chose them before they ever knew of Him or were brought to respond in love to Him. He had them set aside as Apostles, as His messengers to go and tell the gospel and to bear fruit for Him, fruit that would last - as people were brought to God through the Lord Jesus and were saved through their work and ministry. Part of that fruitfulness was the answering of their prayers by the Father - which we see most clearly in the book of Acts.

Although the initial and primary application was to the Apostles, to their call to office and service, these truths have a wider and lasting application to all believers - including us

all this morning, whether in the church building, watching or listening online. If we are believers, it is not because we are cleverer, nicer, better or more religious than anyone else, it is not because of any merit or deserving in us, but all because of God's grace and mercy - He set His love upon us and chose us to be His in eternity outside of time, before the foundation of the world. Realise we are loved before time began.

The ground, the reason for God's love to us, is never found within us, it is always found in Him - His sovereign and unconditional love. He has chosen us and appointed us to bear fruit that will last. Yes, we are chosen to have everlasting life, but coupled with that, is this truth that we are to bear fruit - the fruit of the Spirit, shown in good lives and good works, the fruit of testifying and telling of God's love and mercy in and through the Lord Jesus.

If anyone says they were chosen by God, say they can live as they please, then they are deluding themselves; for fruit bearing = obedience to our Saviour. Where there is no visible fruit of sanctification - holy living, there's little to no evidence of belonging to the Saviour or evidence of salvation!

As we desire to bear fruit, to live obediently, then we will see the need for prayer - to ask our Father for things necessary to bear fruit for the Lord Jesus and as such, these prayers will be answered as we ask them in Jesus' name, in accordance and in agreement with all that pleases Him, which is approved by Him, and for all needed to go on in our work for Him. The Lord Jesus again encourages us on in our prayer life, as we pray in accordance with true motives and from obedient,

thankful hearts and go on in the work and the ways He has for us.

It would be very strange for people who have been given such love, such privileges to want to do that which displeases Him, to be antagonistic to those who would also want to please Him. Yet it is possible and occurs. We have such weakness to our fleshly sinful nature, we have such deceitful hearts, such a cunning enemy, who sows discord and causes strife and therefore division in churches. We are to be on our guard and seek to serve the Lord Jesus in a right way, praying always and aware of the great responsibility laid on us because of the privileges we have been given.

We are to live in such a way always - whether in lockdown and cut-off from the close fellowship of other believers, or when we can resume meeting and worship our God together as His people in the same building. The the love of Jesus is to be known and shown to both Him and to our brothers and sisters in Him. It is working out and showing love to others that is the difficult part, but we cannot give the excuse that we have not known or been shown the love of Jesus to us personally if we are a believer and so we are to demonstrate, show Jesus' love to other people - whether believers or not.

As we will see, this world will not usually be favourable to those who are the children of God in Christ, but we will see this as we carry on looking at this chapter.