

John 13:33-36
Christ's Love Unites Us

Main idea: We're given a new commandment: love as we have been loved.

My sermon this morning is about love.

- One of the greatest examples of love in recent history is Titanic: NOT the movie.
- But as the real Titanic sank, many men gave up their lifeboat seats for women and children.
- Love in its truest form is self-giving, even when it costs everything.¹

Read John 13:33-36

Research shows that across nearly every country, more than 80-90% of people say that caring for others is essential to happiness and meaning. [chart]

- In a study of 24 countries, 83% of people say it's important to feel close to others in their country.
- In another study of nearly every country in the world, in all but six countries, 80% of respondents say family is one of the highest values.
- And 98% of adults in relationships say that it's important to show love to your significant other.

So our passage this morning contains the well-known command to love, something we all know is important.²

- But it's actually in the context of Jesus giving some other final teaching to His disciples.³
- All this takes place in the upper room, just before Jesus is betrayed and goes to the cross.⁴
- What He says here reveals not only how much He loves His disciples, but also how He expects them to live out that love once He's gone.

Jesus saw His disciples as His little children. (v. 33)

- Clara Barton was a great example of a Christian who cared for the needs of others.
 - She was a teacher in the mid-19th century who showed patience and hope for children.
 - During the Civil War, she was a nurse who was given the nickname "Angel of the Battlefield" because she would personally give aid to soldiers on the battlefield.
 - After the war, in 1881, she founded the American Red Cross. [quote]⁵
- Jesus cared for them deeply. He didn't speak to them as servants or students anymore, but as children.
 - This phrase, "little children," shows the tenderness that Jesus had for His disciples.
 - He knew they were about to face confusion, fear, and loss. Like a parent preparing a child for change, He spoke to them gently, but truthfully. He reminded them of His love.
- But Jesus would only be with them for a short while longer.
 - Soon, Jesus would go to the cross, die, be buried, and rise again.
 - To do that, He would have to leave them for a little while, which confused them.
 - Jesus was calling His disciples to trust Him even when they couldn't understand what He was doing.
 - There are a lot of things we don't understand about life.
 - And yet, we still get up in the morning, put on our shoes, and live life.
 - Jesus calls us to trust Him even when we can't understand what He's doing.

¹ John 15:13

² 1 Corinthians 13:13

³ Teaching about humility, servanthood, being made clean (John 13:3-17), and simply receiving Jesus (John 13:20).

⁴ John 18ff

⁵ "Children are our most valuable resource, and the better we educate and guide them, the better the world will be." -Clara Barton

As Jesus was telling His disciples that He would be leaving them soon, He gave them instructions. (v. 34-35)

- This is the heart of the passage, even if the disciples didn't understand it at the time.
- Notice how Jesus doesn't just say "love one another." That part wasn't new. [Leviticus 19:18]
[Deuteronomy 10:19] [Proverbs 10:12]
 - What's new is the standard: "as I have loved you."
 - The love that Jesus commands of us is humble, serving, forgiving, and costly.⁶
 - That's the kind of love He calls His followers to be united in showing each other.
 - Early Christian believers were known for their love. [quote]⁷
 - In the early church, Romans were amazed at how Christians cared for the sick and the poor, even those who weren't believers. Their love was a HUGE witness!
- Love isn't just a private emotion; it's the public lifestyle that shows we belong to Jesus.⁸
- The mark of the Christian is love for one another that looks like Christ's love for us.⁹

But rather than responding to or even acknowledging the instructions, the disciples fixated on the idea that Jesus was leaving. (v. 36-37)

- Humanly speaking, it was reasonable for them to fixate on that.
 - Studies show that negative events stick in our memory longer than positive ones. [graph]
 - Our minds naturally fixate on loss rather than love.¹⁰
 - Jesus was their rabbi, teacher, and Jesus has just called them His little children.¹¹
 - They didn't want Jesus to leave!
- So Peter doesn't even mention the new commandment. His first thought was, "Where are You going?"
 - That's often our reaction, too. We get distracted by what we want instead of fixating on what God wants.
 - But Jesus was ultimately leaving them for their good: to die for their sins, so that they, and we, could be with Him forever.¹²
 - When we follow Jesus, we follow Him in His love all the way into eternity.¹³

Jesus' love unites us because it comes from Him, not from us. [John 15:9]

- Jesus' love is so different from anything else we might call love.
 - It's a love that washes feet, bears burdens, and forgives enemies. It's the kind of love that proves to the world that we belong to Christ.
 - So when we might struggle in our relationships, and be tempted to divide over them, with differences of thought, differences of practices, or even offenses from sin, remember this command: "Love one another as I have loved you."
- Because through that love, the world sees Jesus, and through that love, we are made one.

⁶ John 13:14-15, Ephesians 4:32

⁷ "Why do we not observe that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase unbelief of the pagan gods? For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Christians support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us." -Emperor Julian

⁸ Colossians 3:14, 1 John 3:18

⁹ Matthew 5:16

¹⁰ Colossians 3:2

¹¹ John 13:13

¹² John 16:7

¹³ John 15:9-10