

Rev Sally's Sermon  
May 9, 2021

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Can love be a command? Often, we think of love as a feeling – as an emotion. We think of love as attraction or preference.

But the love that Jesus speaks about is different. The word comes from the Greek word ‘agape’. It’s not primarily a feeling or a preference. Instead, agape means to be for another, to act for the sake of another, even when that action requires self-sacrifice. So, you can see this word isn’t so much a noun, as it is a verb. Agape is something we do.

Jesus commands that we should love one another as he has loved us. As Christians, agape has its ultimate revelation in the love that Jesus revealed for his Father and for us through his obedience to God even when it led to his death on the cross.

When we follow Jesus, we will love. We will follow his example. We will serve those who need help. We will forgive those who have hurt us. We will share what we have with those in need. This love will be passed on to those who are ‘near and dear’ to us, and to those we’ve never met. Sharing God’s love is what we do every day – at work, at home, in the community. We share God’s love as we drive in traffic, as we stand in line at the grocery store, as we listen to someone who’s lonely.

This kind of love might seem difficult. But we don’t do it through our own strength. We love because we have been loved first. We are only able to love because our lives have been enriched by the love of Jesus. When we turn to him, he shares God’s love with us. He reveals God’s forgiveness, God’s compassion, God’s blessings. Then, because the life and love of God live with us, they must live through us. We must share the love we have received.

And as we love, our lives are blessed too. Jesus said, “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.” This state of living in a relationship with Jesus, living in his love, is joy. Yes, we will have struggles. Yes, the world is not perfect, and we will experience loss. Yes, there is brokenness and sin around us. But in the midst of life, we know that Jesus loves us.

And his love gives us joy. It is this joy that empowers us to pass on the love we've received.

We pass on God's love in many different ways. In our actions serving others. In our words of encouragement and support. In gifts given that convey our love. I know often, words of encouragement and support help me to know love. Our words can bless those we know well as well as strangers. "Thank you for your help today." "You look nice today." "You're always there when I need you." Sometimes though, I feel a little embarrassed when I hear them spoken to me, and I'm tempted to ignore them. But I decided years ago, to hear them as gifts from God, and to claim them as reminders of his love.

Some people know love best through gifts given. These don't have to be big or expensive but simply expressions of the love given. Today, I'm sure that many Mother's Day cards will be shared, some store bought and expensive, some handmade and funny, but all beautiful because they all represent love shared through the years – times of sacrifice, service and compassion given and received from mother to child.

Some people know and share love best through their actions. Perhaps one of the times when I felt most loved was when I had to leave Dublin Ga. I didn't have another job. Hiring a moving company would have been very expensive, so my brothers and sister came to Georgia. They loaded up all my earthly possessions into pickup trucks and a trailer and brought me home. I know it wasn't easy for them. They gave up their weekend to help me. But in their actions, I knew their love.

As we love, God's life and God's love are present in our world. God wants his life and love to rule his world. As we pass on to others the love of God that we've known, then we help to make God's love known to others. This is what it means to follow Jesus' command. This is what it means to love each other as Jesus has loved us.