

**May 13, 2012 – Mother's Day**  
**Your Are My Friends**  
**John 15:9-17**

9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. 13 There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. 16 You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

There is a question I want you to consider this morning and it is this: When was the time you felt most loved by your friends or your family?

"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love." (v9)

After our softball game on Monday Brian Franco shared a devotional with the team. It was about the extreme importance of being a good example for Jesus, especially to our children. He said his father, Nicholas (Pastor Nick) was a good example to him, and now he wants to be a good example to Nicholas his son. On this Mother's Day I want to remind you that the greatest influence on your children is not their peers, it is not the media, but you, their parents. When our children copy our good example we are filled with joy. When we follow Christ's example, it fills our Heavenly Father with joy too.

Jesus loved us as the Father loved Him, and we should follow that example of loving as Jesus has loved us. We need to remain in Jesus to love as He loves.

For Jesus to love us even as the Father loves Him is to be loved with the greatest love possible and we should respond with total devotion. The Father has loved Jesus, Jesus has loved the disciples, and now, the disciples are called to remain in Jesus' love. Why wouldn't we want to remain in such perfect love? So how do we remain?

“When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.” (v10)

Jesus explains what it means to remain in His love: it means to obey Jesus' commands – just as He kept His Father's commands. Abiding and remaining involves obeying. God loves us, to remain in His love: obey Jesus.

We love Jesus by obeying Him. True love is never only warm feelings, it is always an action. One reason for loving Jesus is that he has forgiven our sins, but Christian maturity requires that we express our love through obedience. The grace of the Lord not only forgives us, it also strengthens us to walk in ways that please the Father. Why does Jesus want us to remain in His love by obeying His commandments? He tells us in v11.

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! (v11)

The kind of grace, which enables us to love Jesus by obeying Him, is the secret to true joy. While there certainly is joy for the sinner and in heaven when the sinner turns toward God in repentance (Luke 15:10 – “... **there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents.**”), Jesus lays out a pathway for joy to be complete, not just partial. The secret is found in a life of obedience to Jesus. If you want to experience daily joy, obey the Lord. Jesus doesn't call us to a dull existence of being hated by the world, obeying commandments, and waiting to get to heaven. No, He wants us to overflow with joy! Nothing else in all the world can bring the joy that we find in serving, obeying, abiding, and remaining in Jesus. And if we think something else can be the source of complete joy we will be disappointed. Everything else is temporary joy at best. Jesus told us to keep His commandments and then He said the reason He told us that was so that His joy may be in us and our joy would be complete and overflowing. (Gk = cram, make full, perfect, satisfy, finish)

In v10 Jesus calls us to obey His *commandments* – plural. This suggests that He has commanded many things, and we must obey all that He has commanded. In Jesus' day, the Jewish oral tradition was busy collecting and categorizing all of the commands and prohibitions found in the Old Testament. One list that would be refined by Jews in the generation or two following Jesus' death put the total at 613.

But the New Testament is full of commands also. As a matter of fact the new commands are more intense than the old, because they include interior rules like:

"Don't let your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1)

Always be humble and gentle. (Ephesians 4:2)

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!  
(Philippians 4:4)

These are all commands and there are many more in the New Testament for us to obey. However, Jesus appears to focus the whole of obedience down to one thing:

"This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you." (v12)

While certainly John's gospel and the rest of Jesus' teaching contain many specific commands and prohibitions, there is a simplicity to the Christian gospel. There is a single command that comprehends all the other commands: love each other. This is repeated in other scriptures as well:

Romans 13:9-10

For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet." These—and other such commandments—are summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God's law.

Galatians 5:14

For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

These scriptures command us to love others in the same way as we love ourselves, in other words treat others as you would want to be treated. But Jesus gives us even a higher standard, He says, "Love each other in the same way I have loved you." (v12). How has He loved us? He describes how in v13:

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (v13)

The costliness and depth of Christian love is described by the influence and application of Jesus' own example. There is one command: to love. Now we are told the essential attitude of love: self-sacrifice for others. It is not just one command among others, this lies at the heart of the Christian gospel. It is what Jesus meant when He declared what following Him would require: (Mark 8:34).

"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me."

The highest expression of love you can have for another person is to lay down your life for them – just as Jesus did for those He loved. We are to love others sacrificially, as Jesus loved us. We may not have to die for someone, as Jesus did, but sacrificial love also involves helping others, being a good listener, encouraging, giving. We may not feel love for everyone, some make it more difficult than others to love, but still we are commanded to act lovingly, especially to our fellow believers. The question I asked you earlier about a time you felt most loved by your friends or your family, the answer probably involves someone loving you sacrificially. It cost them and it may have been

out of their comfort zone, but they did it, there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for others.

Obedying Jesus by following His example of sacrificial love is the way we remain in His love and the way we are identified as His friends, as He says in v14:

**"You are my friends if you do what I command." (v14)**

Jesus laid down His life for His friends and we are His friends when we do what He commands which is to lay down our life for our friends. That's how you know and how others will know that you are a follower and a friend of Jesus.

The fellowship of those who have entered into such a way of loving Jesus (of obedience in the form of love to the point of self-sacrifice) enjoys a very special privilege: the privilege of being called friends by Jesus. How are we friends of Jesus? Look at v15:

**I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. (v15)**

In the time of Jesus disciples of rabbis were considered servants. Jesus changed that relationship; His disciples would not be His servants but His friends. In what way were they friends and not servants? A master doesn't confide in his servants, but Jesus considered them His friends because He had told them everything He had heard from the Father. When people take something you said and then twist it and pass on gossip to others we don't consider them friends, we want our friends to pass on truth about us. Jesus trusts us, as friends, who will receive His truth and pass it on to others.

Friendship with Jesus allows the faithful follower to know and understand some of the mystery of what God is doing. We can understand something more about the master's business than those who refuse the yoke of loving obedience. What is your relationship with Jesus? Are you a reluctant servant or an intimate friend? How can you know? Ask yourself a few questions:

Do you do what He commands? (He wants you to love Him enough to love others.)

Do you know what He wants to do in the world? (He wants others to experience His love and know who He is.)

Do you know how He thinks? (He wants you to be familiar with what He heard from the Father.)

**"You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name." (v16)**

Jesus made the first choice – to love and to die for us, we make the next choice – to accept or reject His love and His death for our sins. We would have no choice to make if He didn't make the first choice.

Jesus chose and appointed you for a reason - to spread the Gospel and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. The obedient, loving, and prayerful disciple will not only bear fruit, but fruit that will last.

Jesus' statement, that, "the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name" is linked to the command to produce lasting fruit. The Father will answer requests to help accomplish the mission He gave us — to produce fruit.

What is fruit?

Fruit can be new believers, who find the lasting fruit of Eternal life when we tell them about Christ and they accept the news of Christ, or fruit can be the enduring quality of the fruit of the Spirit in your own life, especially the fruit of love, for the fruit of the Spirit in our life is a witness to the reality of Christ and another way to spread the Gospel – by the example of our lives. We pass on the truth of Christ with our lips and with our lives. In v17 Jesus sums it all up like this:

**This is my command: Love each other. (v17)**

Love must first be enacted here among believers before we can bring it to the world.

We are Easter people. Easter is a profound invitation to enter into and remain in God's love, to enter into a relationship of deep intimacy with God through Christ. It is a relationship so intimate that He calls us friends. It is a relationship of overflowing joy, Easter joy, completion of joy. Yet, this joy is fully known when we love others, when our lives bear fruit. The only way to truly love people, enemies included, is to give away the love you have personally received from God.

Before you leave today, let someone know how much you appreciate them or how much you appreciated something they did for you; and if you need to ask forgiveness, or reconcile a relationship do it today before you leave here; during the week, keep in touch by phone, email, card, or actually get together. It has to start here, love each other, others will know the truth of Jesus if we love one another. You will remain in Christ, and find completion of joy as you love one another.

"I love you and want you to remain in my love. To do that you must obey everything I tell you. I am telling you to keep my commands to remain in my love so that you will be filled with my joy, and your joy will overflow! My commandments are summed up like this: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. What does that mean? Lay down your life for others there is no greater love you can give to your friends. You're my friends if you do what I command; not servants but friends, that I confide in and trust to pass on everything the Father told me and I passed on to you. I chose and appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other."