

Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
Sunday February 19, 2006 – 9 & 11 AM

Love One Another **John 13:34-35**

Today we express our love for one another as we welcomed new official voting members to our church. We will be expressing our love for one another as we join in a fellowship meal together after the 11:00 service today as a way of uniting the congregation that is split between two service times as well as honoring those who have decided to join the church officially.

This message was supposed to be given last week, but we were snowed out of service. I was to speak about love last week since it was just two days before Valentine's Day. I was going to give a word of warning and encouragement for men out there, so you would do something special for the one you love. However, it's after the fact now, so you're on your own. I sure hope you did something special. How many valentines do we have in the congregation today?

This month marks another special occasion in our church. Pastor Jerry is celebrating his 20th year of service to this local church this month. I would encourage you to send him a card or a note of appreciation and a commitment to pray for him and his leadership of this church. Pray for God's wisdom and direction as he seeks God's will in the affairs of the church and in how to best minister to our needs as the sheep under his care. Let's have a word of prayer for our Pastor right now...

This subject – “love one another” – is not something that is short of references. In fact one can find a passage from almost every book in the Bible to preach this message from. The Bible is a love story from cover to cover and speaks about the love of God, love for God, and love for each other.

However, I chose just a couple of verses from John's Gospel as the text for today for some very specific reasons.

This Fourth Gospel is written much later than the other Gospels, and the audience was second and third generation Christians by this time. They needed some more detailed instruction and understanding about Jesus. Problems of apostasy and theological debate, in addition to the opposition from the outside, created a need for a fresh presentation of Jesus and His love for the church. This gospel is more theological than the Synoptic gospels and portrays “Jesus as the Lord of the maturing and questioning believer.” John is writing to the church that is made up of mostly gentile believers by this time and who know Jesus as presented in the other gospels. Therefore, this gospel is fresh wind to these people by presenting a new approach to understanding Jesus the person and close friend of the author, John. This gospel is written to meet a spiritual need in the church of this day who had little Scriptural understanding and who needed something to rekindle their faith in Jesus Christ, for who He really is – the Son of God, the Word of God made flesh and who dwelt among us – full of grace, truth, and compassion – who gave His life to redeem humanity and is coming back again at the appointed time in power and great glory – He is the Messiah.

Our text today falls in the section of chapters that speak of the events that occurred on the night of Jesus' betrayal and especially during the Last Supper scene... Judas has left their company to betray Jesus, and Jesus uses this last opportunity to share with the disciples His final important words of instruction.

If you knew you were about to die in a day or so, what would you want to say to your children or friends? Time was short. There's no joking or wasting precious time with superficial non-

essentials. What would we want to make sure they understand? Here is what Jesus thought was most important for His disciples to know and subsequently to teach to other followers. Jesus addresses the eleven as “Dear Children” in v. 33 – just before our text. How loving and how intimate! He then leaves them with these important words to live by – the most important instruction He could give to them, and by John’s gospel, to the church, and to us today as well.

John 13:34-35

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

What do you think He’s trying to say here ?

Let’s look at these verses in three parts ...

A New Command – Love One Another.

This doesn’t sound so new to me. Love has been a central theme of the Bible since before it was written down. God commanded Israel in Deut. 6:4-5 to love God. It is called the Shema and was to be recited everyday by the followers of the God of Israel. It is a command they agree to every day – to love the Lord above everything else in their lives and acknowledge Him. It is a daily commitment.

Jesse – hospital visit – Shema story. Didn’t have to think about it – it is part of who He is.

Deut 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

So, love for God is paramount in Hebrew tradition and in Scripture. There’s nothing new about that. Just a couple of pages later in Deut. there is an entire section of love and obedience.

Deut 10:12-13 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

v. 18-20

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.

We see here a command to love others, aliens in the community – to care for them and love them as God loves. So, we see that this is not a new command either.

The Law commands in **Lev. 19:18** that the followers of God must love our neighbors as ourselves.

Lev 19:18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Jesus summed up these commands as the greatest of all the commandments of God. In fact, He said these two commands, to love God completely and to love others selflessly, sums up all of God’s Law and the admonishments of the prophets from of old. **Jesus speaks of God’s command to love God and love others in all three synoptic gospels – (Matt. 22, Mark 12, Luke 10).**

Jesus commands us to love our enemies, and to love and honor our parents, to love the Lord with all we are, and to love others. We know that God loved the world so much He gave His only Son to die for us, and we are told to remain in His love at all times. We understand God's love command! **Love is the greatest command and greatest gift. The foundation of Christianity is Love because – "God is Love" (1 Jn. 4:8).**

The Christian movement was founded on love and is still involved in loving and caring for others. Pope Benedict XVI's missive is directed toward getting back to this basic foundation of Christianity. I would like to share a couple of points from the Pope's encyclical as captured in Newsday a couple of weeks ago...

(READ – Missive excerpts)

With all that we know and understand about God's command to love, it isn't until this very text in John's Gospel that we are commanded to love one another. Jesus truly gave a new command. Yeah – the Law taught one to love others and take care of them. Isn't it so much easier to extend the right hand of fellowship to those we don't really know? While there was an outreach concept to the command, there was also a very relevant call to the existing members to love each other in order to further the kingdom. We are not just commanded to love those outside, but those inside the church of Jesus Christ. It's one thing to overlook the wrongs of those who don't yet know Jesus, but what about our brothers and sisters that we serve with each week in the church? How can we overlook the wrongs they do to us, the selfishness that we can recognize, and the attitudes that are displayed at gatherings that should be focused on reaching the community around us? It's much harder to love one another than it is to love God, neighbor, alien, the poor and the outcast. That's why it's a new command – love one another. **If we can't love one another, how can we love the outsiders?**

As I have loved you – Love One Another

Jesus knows the motives of human hearts. He knew that the motive of some of His closest disciples was to earn or obtain a higher place in the Messianic kingdom. His own disciples were concerned over who would sit closest to Jesus in the heaven. Jesus knew that rivalry would disrupt their fellowship and derail them from accomplishing His commission to them. The only way they could be united in purpose and mission is if love was the glue that bound them together. The only way the attitude of love could be genuinely realized in their lives is by His Spirit. He loved them without reservation and without limit. Jesus passed along to them and to us the very model that He experienced from His Father in Heaven.

He demonstrated to us how to love, and now we are expected, by the command of Jesus, to love one another the same way. Jesus demonstrated genuine love to us all by his compassion, through his teachings, through his miracles, and through the healings. He tells us ...

John 15:9-10

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

What is his command?

John 15:12

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Jesus was completely unselfish. Too often we love with selfish motives. I really have my own interests in mind most of the time, rather than purely the interests of others first. Yet Jesus was about to lay down His very life out of genuine love for humanity – so we would not be condemned and perish but have eternal life. He taught us to give without expecting anything in return – not an easy concept to swallow in our modern culture and society. Think about giving something wonderful and helpful to someone. Wouldn't you really want to be recognized for that wonderful thing that you did? After all, you made a donation or gave of your time, and it made the difference in the events that followed. Come on – wouldn't you really want to be acknowledged for that? We are to love one another as Jesus has loved. How did He love them and us? Selflessly and sacrificially! Victory comes through sacrifice. This is a major lesson Jesus came to teach us.

The context in this section of John's Gospel is the Last Supper scene, the last night of Jesus life.

John 13:1

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus was about to put action to His words one final time as He went to the cross for us. He repeats this command several times as his last and most important instruction to us all. In these chapters of John's gospel, Jesus tells us over and over again that we must obey His final command to love one another, and Jesus love was unconditional – no strings attached – well, one string ...

John 14:15

"If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 15:17 - This is my command: Love each other.

This command is very important for several reasons. We will experience joy and peace if we love each other. We will accomplish more together if we love one another. The most important reason is the one that Jesus tells us in our text.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples – if you love one another.

One of the greatest blessings that we can receive is when someone recognizes that we are Christians because of our love for each other. This isn't always easy. In all of our lives this takes surrender. We have a problem with control and being right, with what we consider fair or reasonable, and with taking ownership of things when we should be serving and yielding to others. Love for one another has to start within the church before it can be genuinely reflected to the people in the world. We have a mission given to us by Jesus Himself. Love one another so you can show the world out there that you are My disciples, so they can find salvation in Christ and experience His love. We're not in this alone, and we're not in this for ourselves and the blessings we have. How did Jesus tell us to show this love?

Luke 6:27-28

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

People are watching – How are you showing them that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Luke 6:35-36

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

How we act when we are mistreated is more important than how we act when everything is going smoothly. Look at your own life. What things really push your buttons? What offenses have been done to you or are being done to you, and what are you showing the world in your actions? You can try to show the love of Christ the best ways you can think of, but when you react in a situation in a way that is off base just a little, people will notice and bring that up in your face. As we genuinely learn to love one another, we are actually being given more of God's love within us and loving others becomes more and more natural.

1 John 4:7-12

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete (or perfect) in us.

So, how are we doing? I mean, how is the church, the followers of Jesus Christ, the ones who have heard and understood His Word, doing? Have we learned the secret of love? Do we genuinely love one another? – Not just those outside the church, but the ones we minister with and fellowship with – within the church? On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your own level of love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? And what does the world see in our day to day lives...

(Parking etiquette video clip)

There must be unity within the Body of Christ. Jesus tried to instruct us in this very area.

He commands us to love one another.

He also tells us that if there's no unity within the church, we cannot succeed in our mission.

Matt 12:25

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.

We are not yet perfected in love, but we must be striving towards that goal. Many times we intend to be loving toward everyone, and then that incident happens that derails our human attempts to love one another. We are weak, and we cannot uphold this command all the time. Thank God that we have the Spirit of Christ within us to bring us to this wholeness of love for one another. It is a process, and we are on this course together. There is nothing more important than to love one

another. This was Jesus final important concern for his disciples before He gave His life for the sins of the world. It is His eternal commandment to us today.

We must - love one another.

Rom 13:8

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 John 3:11

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:23

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

1 Thess. 4:9

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

We have seen how Jesus built upon an age old foundational command of love to create a new command to the church, the body of Christ. So where do you stand on this issue to love one another? Are you doing all you can do in the church because you have settled this issue of love for one another and can be serving unselfishly? Are you still holding on to old hurts and pain of disappointment? Remember we are here to know Jesus and make Him known to those outside our four walls. We must genuinely love one another within the church before we can expect God to bless our love for those outside the church. Let us pray together.