

Reading John 15:9-17

## Sermon: 17 May 2009

The text for the sermon:

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>1</sup>

There is no word in our vocabulary that is so frequently used as the word *love*. In the Greek language there are different words to depict the different meanings attached to the word "love" namely:

- *Agape* - specifically means to love the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection. *Agape* is usually used for divine love.
- *Eros* sexual love (occur no where in NT)
- *Phileo*, (beloved, dear friends) connoting natural affection, occurs some 25 times, with *philadelphia* (brotherly love) five times, and *philia* (friendship) only in James 4:4.

In our text two Greek words are used namely *agape* and *phileo* "beloved". The text speaks of "Godly love" as a given or according to the Greek grammar as an indicative. And from this given there is a natural imperative/task involved. Jesus has a close relationship with his Father through love and therefore between Him and his followers. Jesus says God loved them first. He does not love them because of something they did or did not do. His love is unconditional. In the Greek text *agape* or divine love is a verb. It means that God's love is love in action. God acted to redeem the sins of humanity through his love, mercy, and grace.

Jesus wanted to make it clear. God's love is a given reality but from this given there is a natural imperative. He obeyed God and therefore He could be part of God's love. If his followers obey his commandment, they can also be part of this Godly love as a given. Actually because God loves them so much, it is only natural that they should live the love that they received with joy.

Then Jesus explains something of this love. This love means sacrifice. Jesus laid down his life for his followers. He was ready and prepared to die in order for his followers to live in all eternity with God without blemish or sin. Judaism, however, generally has rejected such self-sacrifice as an unnecessary and inappropriate pattern for life. But Jesus' love is different. He made his followers his "beloved" or "friends". Something that was unheard of in his day. In those days you would only "love" people that had the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Jn 15:10-12

same status as you in their society. You would not be “friends” with people that had less status as you had. You would also be treated according to your status. But Jesus does not treat them as people that has less status as He has. No he calls them his “beloved” followers which He includes in his life’s mission. He does not treat them as slaves. He called them to be his followers and equipped them with knowledge about his redemption and eternal glory. He gives them the knowledge to accept His divine purpose. Usually in those days it worked the other way round. Students or disciples called on a rabbi to lead them. And slaves were not supposed to know their masters plans.

Then Jesus explains what this love means. It means that they must go out and bear the fruit of God’s love in the world in everything they do. In making this connection with fruit bearing, Jesus recaptures the metaphor of the vine in this crucial statement on discipleship. But as his followers they are never alone. They have God who will help them. They can talk to him in prayer. They must always seek his advice in everything they do. He will help them. And again this is a given fact.

Jesus emphasizes in verse 17 what discipleship really means. Discipleship means to live and act out the love that God had for his followers, a love that is willing to sacrifice and obey the will of God. God chose them as his followers to bear the fruit of his love. It means to live in a living community of disciples who love one another.

God’s love is later described in Romans chapter 8 as an act of God which surpasses all division, sickness, and even death! God so loved the world that He gave his only Son!

I think for us this quite mind boggling, especially in the day and age that we live in.

It reminds me of a vivid picture that I once saw of a whale cow that swam close to the shore to give birth. Once the calf was born she could not swim out with the calf in the open sea. She was stranded. Then something amazing happened. She made a strange sound as if she was calling the rest of the herd to come and help her. Then a whale appeared, presumably another cow and this stranded cow started to push the calf towards her. The other cow waited patiently for the calf and after a few times that the calf swam back to his mother, eventually swam away with his new adopted mother.

I think this is love in action like we find in our reading. This is the love that God had for us. But it is also the love He expects us to have for one another. Love that is ready to sacrifice, that is unconditional, full of mercy and undeserved.

The big question is: do our actions in the world signify the love of God? Can other people see through our attitude of love and mercy that God’s love for humanity is a given? Do our children see it in the way we speak as parents to each other? Can they experience it in our relationships with one another?

It is tragic that we live in a world where people lost the foundation of true love namely God’s love. It is sad that our world confuses the love of God with cheap love, money,

greed, and materialism. It is regrettable that we as followers of Jesus do not convince them otherwise by our actions of love. But we cannot love one another if we do not love God. And to love God means hard work, sacrifice, and commitment. It means to have a constant relationship with him. It means that He comes first before everything else that we plan or do. It means to be on the lookout for the victims that surround us – the victims of broken relationships, abandoned children, and elderly people. The love of God means that you and I must become a brother and a sister to everyone in need. But we do not have to lose sleep over **all** the needy. No we must just start at our own front door in the way we treat our children, our husbands and wife's, our partners, our mothers and fathers, brother, and sisters the postman, our neighbours, and the people that phone us doing marketing! The love of God must be a given in everything we as his followers do, say and think!

You and I have received enough love from God to share it with our world. May God's Spirit grant us the strength and willingness to love one another and so be the fruit bearers that He intended us to be.

Let us all close our eyes now and in a moment of silence think of the opportunities where we can show and tell everyone about God's love....

Amen

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## Readings for the week

### John 15.9-17 (from [www.rootsontheweb.com](http://www.rootsontheweb.com))

This passage develops themes in the parable of the true vine from the previous week, Remaining in Christ means remaining in the love that comes through him from the Father, exemplified above all in Jesus' voluntary death. The final fruit of such love, however, is not death, but complete joy, of the sort, perhaps, that makes even the mountains sing. This joy results from the extraordinary new understanding of friendship that Jesus reveals: with the one who is the disciples' master, and through him, by implication, with God the Father, made accessible to every ordinary human being. This friendship transcends the ordinary categories of liberty and slavery. The disciples do not choose it, and they are to live it in obedience. Yet it is precisely their loving and obedient acceptance that sets them free.

Other readings: Acts 10:44-48 ; Psalm 98 ; 1 John 5:1-6.