

“I Love You”
Words We Long to Hear Sermon Series
Matthew 5:43-48
Dr. Mark Foster
October 25, 2020

“The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.” – Mother Teresa

Five Obstacles to Saying or Hearing the Words “I Love You”

1. The constant demand of _____ and _____. “You can’t love in a hurry.”
2. Our inability to manage _____.
3. Our radical addiction to _____ and ease.
4. Our expectation of _____ change.
5. _____ and pride.

“I have become convinced that one of the most important things any of us can do as a Christian is to _____ before we _____.” – John Wimber

What Does the Bible Say about Love?

Love is _____ God.

God’s love is revealed through _____.

The point is not _____ love for God but God’s love for us as shown in Jesus.

To love one another is the only _____ that we know the invisible God.

“We love because God _____ loved us.” 1 John 4:19

God’s command to us is to love _____ people.

Love lets others _____. It _____, doesn’t demand, demean, or destroy.

“Love...is not only ‘the first and great’ command, but all the commandments in one.” – John Wesley

Love is not a _____.

What Love Does

Love _____.

Love does not _____. God’s love in Jesus came to _____.

“There is no greater day in the Christian life than when we discover that salvation means _____. It doesn’t merely mean going to heaven when we die; it means living abundantly while we are here.” – Steve Harper

Love does what is _____ for the other even when the other does not or cannot understand it.

“It is the Holy Spirit’s job to convict, God’s job to judge and my job to love.” – Billy Graham

What Love Looks Like

God accepts and even _____ those who rebel and return.

“We must understand that God does not ‘love’ us without liking us – through gritted teeth – as ‘Christian’ love is sometimes thought to do.” – Dallas Willard

Saying “I Love You” as a Church: Core Values

1. WELCOMING ALL: We open doors to help others find Christ, we serve others to help them grow in Christ, and we trust God with the outcomes.
2. LOVE AUTHENTICALLY: We love God and others without pretending.
3. LIGHT OF THE WORLD: We share the joy that has been shared with us.

Action Step: What happens next when someone says, “I love you?” _____

Next Sunday, November 1, bring food items or give money for “pantry packs.”

Daily Reading and Reflection

October 26-30, 2020

Monday, October 26 – Read and reflect on 1 John 4: *“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.” – 1 John 4:12*

In many Bibles, today’s reading will have a heading that states pretty clearly, “God is Love.” We experience and share love with one another because God first shared it with us. Love became an inherent part of our being from the moment of creation when God breathed life into our lungs. To love *seems* like a natural thing for us to do; however, we know this isn’t true in practice. Sin corrupts this divine nature within us, and causes us to resent, loathe, and hate. Each of these things drive us further away from one another and from God. But when we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, when we practice love as Jesus did, God’s love is perfected within us.

Tuesday, October 27 – Read and reflect on Psalm 13: *“But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” – Psalm 13:5-6*

From the time that God gave the Israelites the law until the time of Jesus, the law was meant to provide order, identity, and protection to God’s people. Can you remember when you were a kid, and your parents or family members put rules in place that seemed to damper all the fun you wanted to have? From a young age, we experience rules as a negative thing. Only as we mature and grow older do we realize that these rules were placed in our lives for our well-being—they were given to us out of love. It is not dissimilar to how the law functioned for the Israelites. These were not punishments; they were loving provisions. When the Psalmist in today’s reading cries out, God’s ever-faithful love is celebrated with joy.

Wednesday, October 28 – Read and reflect on Luke 15: *“When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’” – Luke 15:9*

On Sunday, Pastor Mark said, “God accepts and even celebrates those who rebel and return.” In Luke 15, Jesus shares three different stories about the celebration of items found and rebels returned. It would be easy to criticize the shepherd for losing his sheep or the old woman for losing her coin. It’s certainly not difficult to judge the prodigal son and express disappointment as the elder son did. But these things aren’t love. Love is accepting the sacredness within another. Love is another chance when no one wants to give you another one. Love is rejoicing when a child of God returns home.

Thursday, October 29 – Read and reflect on Ruth 1: *“But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.’” – Ruth 1:16*

The story of Ruth and Naomi is one of precious friendship and deep, abiding love. It’s a story of selflessness, sacrifice, and commitment. This kind of love doesn’t make much sense. Pastor Mark said, “Love does what is best for the other even when the other does not or cannot understand it.” When we live with “the other” in mind – be that a family member or foreigner – we live with the mind and heart of Christ. When we love the way that Jesus loves us, it’s going to stand out, and people will take notice. Our core values as a church are a reflection of this. When we truly welcome all, when we truly love authentically, and when we truly are the light of the world, the world will take notice and be drawn in.

Friday, October 30 – Read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 13: *“If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” – 1 Corinthians 13:3*

Love is sacrificial, and God’s love for us is extravagant. When love becomes an action for an entire church, what does it look like? It looks a lot like what we’ll be doing as a church this coming Sunday. We’re partnering with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma to pack 200 pantry packs for the School Partnership Program. Each pack provides 5 ready-to-eat meals, 32 kid-friendly snacks, and enough peanut butter and jelly for 32 sandwiches. When a child receives one of these packs with a note of encouragement from an Acts 2 family member, they will experience the extravagant love of Christ. In the same way, as Mother Teresa said, “The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.” We’ll have contactless drop-off donation stations, and for those who are comfortable being in person, we’ll have note writing and packing stations ready for you. It takes just \$10 to assemble a pack, but a pack’s value in the life of a child is far greater.