

Last week we celebrated the resurrection of our Savior. The week before we had the preceding passage in John 15 on Jesus' "I am the vine" declaration. We saw the prophetic implications of that from Psalm 80. This took place during Jesus' last night, and may have been in the Temple looking at the great golden vine over the entrance to the Holy Place, the Truth Gate. We saw how important it is to remain in Jesus, and that remaining in Him means to continue in a daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy. That is the only way to bear the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

In our passage today, Jesus continues with the theme of bearing the fruit of love, which is to be like Him. ⁹ *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.* Do you recall back when we first began our study in John that I shared with you the Father's great love for the Son and the Son's great love for the Father? They have forever been satisfied with one another. Everything of value they find in one another. There is nothing to dislike. They are completely pleased with one another and need nothing else, yet, they chose to create us and invite us into that holy fellowship they share. (John 1:1)

When Jesus told the disciples that He loves them like the Father loves Him, I don't think they could take in the fullness of what He meant. From their perspective, Jesus must have been the most loved by God person to have ever lived for the Father always answered His requests. People in that culture believed that miracles were a result of a special relationship with God. They believed God listened to those who were righteous and would not hear the prayer of sinners. (John 9:31) Considering the fact that the life of Jesus was filled with more miracles than any of the prophets before Him, they must have been convinced that God loved Jesus more than anyone in history. Now Jesus tells them that is how He loves them! Wow! They must have felt very special, and they are. So are we. We're special because the Creator of all things has set His love on us.

Does Jesus love you like that? Absolutely! How can you know? He died for you! (Ephesians 3:18; Romans 5:8) Put your name in that verse. ⁹ *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved ...* As God loves Jesus, so Jesus loves you, but He has some instruction for us. *Now remain in my love.* Now that you know you are loved, you should stay in that love. The word "remain" (*meno*) was used for soldiers that held their ground against an attack. That says to me that we can give up and desert that love, go out from it, stop living in it, if we so choose. That is a frightening thought. I'm not trying to argue a theological point. I'm just trying to understand what Jesus was teaching. The command to remain is repeated over and over throughout the Scriptures. (John 8:31; 2Timothy 3:14; Acts 14:22)

Jesus goes on to tell us how to stay in His love. ¹⁰ *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.* Over and over we have seen that Jesus is our perfect example. He asks us to live like He lived and do what He did. (John 13:15) We have also seen in John's Gospel that Jesus only does what the Father tells Him. (John 5:19) He only obeys His

Commented [notes1]: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Gal 5:22-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. John 9:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. John 8:31 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 2 Tim 3:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Acts 14:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. John 13:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. John 5:19 (NIV)

commands. He isn't swayed by what people think. (Matthew 22:16) He doesn't take a poll and then act. He's only concerned about what His Father thinks. He remained in His Father's love because He obeyed His commands. Now He asks us to do the same with Him. How do we remain in Jesus' love? We remain in His love by obeying His commands.

If you won't do as Jesus' commands, it means you have stopped loving Him. Will He stop loving you? Since Jesus describes our relationship as a father with children (Mark 10:24), as brothers (Mark 3:35), and as friends (John 15:14), I would think that He really never stops loving us. (1Chronicles 16:34) Still, just as when a family member becomes antagonistic and isolates them self from the rest of the family, or when a child goes through a stage of rebellion, the relationship is strained. We don't stop loving them, but we don't really want to be with them. When we are together, there is constant tension, as they don't desire to be with us. (Isaiah 59:2) It's a relief when the time together is over. I think that is what Jesus is warning them to avoid. How do we avoid that? It's by staying in His love, continuing to obey, just as we would want our children to obey our loving commands.

Jesus doesn't command us to do things because He likes to be bossy. He commands us to do things because He loves us, and He knows the results that obedience would bring to our lives. ¹¹ *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* He commands us to obey because He wants us to share His joy. He knows the joy of obeying His Father! (Psalm 19:8) He wants to share that joy with us! Don't you want to share your joy with your spouse and children? By obeying the Father, Jesus possessed a joy that was unspeakable and full of glory. (1Peter 5:8) When we obey God, we are living how God intended us to live. There is a deep satisfaction of doing what we were created to do. The load of guilt is gone. Peace and comfort flood your life. That all results in a joy that goes way beyond circumstantial happiness. To the Jewish person, worship was a joy and the main seasons of worship were called feasts, but the ultimate spiritual joy was only to be experienced in the Messianic age. By saying that obeying His commands would bring perfect joy, Jesus was declaring the Messianic age to have arrived.

You have probably met people who live in that kind of joy. It's comforting to be around them. They're so peaceful and pleasant. They are at peace with God and with man. There is nothing you could do to them to rob them of that joy. (1Peter 4:13) On the other hand, you've been around brothers or sisters in Christ and there is a tumultuous atmosphere. Something is wrong, and you can feel it. The joy is missing. That is one way the Holy Spirit can warn us. If the joy is gone, we've stopped obeying our Lord. We have refused to be pruned and quit living in Him. (Colossians 3:15)

One of the most common ways to get in that place of rebellion is through taking offense at others actions toward us. Another is just selfishly putting our interests first. So Jesus tells us, ¹² *My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.* We saw this command earlier in John 13:34. Jesus again added "*as I have loved you*". The next day they would find out how much He loved them. The next verse tells them the greatest love lays down it's life for those it loves. How are we supposed to love like that? We can only love like He loved when we remain in the vine. If our life

Commented [notes11]: 16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.
Matt 22:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!
Mark 10:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."
Mark 3:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 14 You are my friends if you do what I command.
John 15:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 34 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
1 Chron 16:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
Isaiah 59:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
Psalms 19:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
1 Peter 1:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 1 Peter 4:13 (NIV)
13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Commented [notes20]: 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
Col 3:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
John 13:34 (NIV)

flows from Him, we will bear the same fruit in our life that He bore in His. The open ear to Him will be like His open ear to the Father. (Isaiah 50:4) Loving obedience will result in much fruit, including the fruit of loving others like Jesus loves us. Jesus' very own life will flow through us, helping us to live as He lived. I know it sounds impossible, but if you think about it, you have probably experienced this on either the giving or receiving end. In John's first letter, chapter 4 verse 21, he tell us ²¹ *And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* It's not a suggestion. If you love God, you MUST love your brother.

Commented [notes22]: 4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. Isaiah 50:4 (NIV)

Sgt. Rafael Peralta was a man who lived this verse. He was always helping others, whether it was being the designated driver after his buddies had been drinking or teaching his friends to Salsa dance. On November 14, 2004, in spite of having an easier assignment, Peralta volunteered to go with a squad to check out an insurgent safe house in Fallujah, Iraq.

Once inside, he was hit with a bullet to the face. The team pulled back into a side room when suddenly a grenade came rolling into the room. The men with Peralta tried to break through the back door to escape it, but it was locked. Peralta grabbed the grenade and doubled himself over it, saving the rest of the men in the room. His fellow marines did not think it strange that he was the one to save them with his own life, because he always acted in an unselfish way.

¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* Peralta exemplified this verse, but he was following the example of someone that did it long before him. When we came into this world of sin, we were under fire from the enemy of our souls. The grenade of judgment came rolling into our room and there was no way out. Everyone in the room of this fallen world was going to die. Jesus volunteered to come into the room with us, reached out and took that grenade of judgment and wrapped Himself around it, dying that we might live. He had displayed the greatest love that can be seen, the laying down of His life for us. Peralta knew he would probably die one way or the other, but Jesus chose to walk into that room and take it for us. (John 16:28) Peralta did it for his brothers in arms. Jesus did it for us while we were yet sinners. (Romans 5:8)

Commented [notes23]: 28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." John 16:28 (NIV)

Laying down your life in love does not only come at the end of life. That is a one time momentary decision. The real difficulty is laying it down day after day after day in service to those who may not appreciate or understand what you are doing. Again, I ask you how that is possible? It is only the life of Christ flowing through us. There is no other way. We must remain in the vine, continually in a daily, personal relationship with Jesus, characterized by trust, prayer, obedience, and joy. (1John 4:7)

Commented [notes24]: 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)

¹⁴ *You are my friends if you do what I command.* If we obey Jesus, we remain in His love and we are His friends. Once again, we need to hear this with Jewish ears. If you asked the Jews about who was a friend of God, they would immediately think of their forefather Abraham. Listen to this verse from James. ²³ *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.* James 2:23 (NIV) James, the half-brother of Jesus, links this believing faith with righteousness and friendship with God. God commands and the believing soul responds. Obedience is a demonstration of the faith we possess.

Commented [notes25]: 7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7 (NIV)

That faith is motivated by love. We could say then that all born-again believers that continue to follow Jesus' commands are Jesus' friends.

Are you His friend? You see, it wouldn't make a lot of sense to say you were His friend if you always ignored His loving and gracious commands and never spent time with Him. If you chose to hate your brother or sister, when Jesus commands you to love him or her, how could you call yourself His friend? Should He call you His friend? As much as He may love you, the friend relationship does not exist for those who choose not to obey Him. (James 4:4)

Our friendships with one another are not based on obedience because we are created beings with a fallen nature. We don't really have any right to command one another, unless we are in some God ordained capacity. (Hebrews 13:17) But Jesus is our Maker. He knows all things. His commands are given out of love. He never makes a mistake in what He commands us. His commands are always best for us. When we refuse to obey His commands, we are saying in affect, "I trust myself more than I trust my Maker." I'd call that naïve, arrogant, or just plain stupid. Whatever it is, good luck with the outcome.

15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. Disciples of the first century were their rabbi's servants. They waited on their master. Jesus is saying that His relationship with His disciples, and that includes all who learn from Him, is one of more than a servant but that of a friend.

Jesus isn't saying we don't serve Him. In fact, most of the New Testament writers introduce themselves as "a servant of Jesus Christ". (James 1:1; Philippians 1:1) Jesus is getting at the intimacy of our relationship with Him. He doesn't treat us like the world treats their servants. He treats us like friends. He shares the things that are really on His heart, everything that He learned from the Father. He doesn't hold back, but shares it all. There is no secret wisdom that He withholds from us as was the case with Gnostic masters and their disciples.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. It was common for a student to carefully choose which rabbi he would follow. He may have been rejected, but it was the disciple that did the choosing. Jesus turned that around. He chose the Twelve. He chose you and me. Those who struggle with God's sovereignty wonder how we could still have free will. He chooses those who are willing to be chosen. (1 Peter 1:2) He even chooses some who won't choose Him, and yet He lets them have the final say such as was the case with Judas. You are here this morning because God chose you, but He lets you have the final say. (Revelation 22:17)

He also appoints those He chooses to bear fruit. He wants everyone in the vine to bear fruit. Some interpreters think the fruit is other believers. They argue that an apple tree has apples for fruit and the believer should have more believers as fruit. But Jesus just said He is the one that chooses us! Walking in the Spirit, (staying in the

Commented [notes26]: 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. James 4:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Heb 13:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. James 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Phil 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. 1 Peter 1:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Rev 22:17 (NIV)

vine) will bear the fruit of the Spirit and that will draw people to Jesus. (John 12:32) We are commanded to make disciples (Matthew 28:19), but it is Jesus who chooses who will be grafted into the vine.

Notice that it is fruit that lasts. This is the joy that doesn't come and go. If you are in the vine, the fruit of joy endures; the love and the peace is not just a passing experience. It is your new life. It lasts. As long as you are in the vine it will remain. That is so encouraging in our current world situation. As everything seems to be hanging by a thread and we wonder what tomorrow will bring, you can know that the fruit of the Spirit in you is meant to remain through whatever comes. (John 14:27)

If you are in Jesus and the fruit of the Spirit remains in your life, you will pray according to God's will. He will hear that prayer and answer it because you ask with Jesus' authority, which is what it means to ask in His name. (1John 5:14)

17 This is my command: Love each other. Jesus repeats Himself. It is His way of stressing that this command is a priority. As the disciples would start to point fingers after the crucifixion, as the church age would begin and tares would be sown among the wheat (Matthew 13:25), one of our greatest needs is to love one another. Love that type A personality that always has to tell you how to do it. Love that person that has to always bring up their favorite doctrine. Love the ones that disagree with you even after you have shown from the Scriptures why something must be done. Love them because they are tolerating things in you and me as well. Love them because Jesus loves us in spite of all the things He puts up with in us. If you expected heaven in church I have to tell you that you will be disappointed. Church is a place where we get ready for heaven by learning to love one another. If the church were perfect, we wouldn't be allowed in! If we can't love one another, how will we ever reach out to a lost world with God's love?

It is love that will show the world we belong to Jesus. (John 13:35) John was one of the only disciples to die of old age. There is a story from the Church Fathers about John in his old age being carried each week to church in a chair. The congregation in Ephesus would ask him each week if there was a word from the Lord. Week after week John would reply, "Love one another, for when this is done, all is done." (1John 4:12)

To continue to love one another is a by-product of staying in the vine. It is letting Jesus' joy see you through the difficulties. This love is not a suggestion; it is a command. When we find ourselves with a lack of love, unable to keep the command, it is a warning light that tells us we'd better get back in the vine or we'll dry up. This love thing is a God thing. God is love! (1John 4:8) It's normal life in the Trinity, and He wants it to be normal life for us, not just in this life but also for eternity. How can you love someone today in a practical way? I could give you a million examples, but better than that, just stay in the vine, and watch His love flow to others. Then you can tell me how God showed you to love others with His love. Church, love one another, for when this is done, all is done. (1John 4:7)

Commented [notes32]: 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." John 12:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matt 28:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes35]: 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 1 John 5:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. Matt 13:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes40]: 7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7 (NIV)