Jesus, what do you mean?

***“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

Or, When we should care what others think

John 13:35

**The Words:**

Along with being one of the more wonderful words in our languages, “love” is also is one of the more flexible and abused. But Jesus’ point is crucial, for He is telling us how the world can validate for themselves if we are following Him. He spoke these words as He ate His last meal with the disciples, calling them to a New Covenant and a New Law, the Law of Love. “Jesus, what do you mean?”

**The Challenge:**

So, is the love of which Jesus speaks a garden variety care-taking, or is it more? How do we sort out whether or not love is real? And don’t others, even from other religious traditions, show love? Is it charity, or good will? It is “being nice?” If it is something more, what makes it special, and how does it work? 1 John 3:11-18; 4:7-21

**The Principle: Self-sacrificing love shows discipleship.**

Sacrificial love, in terms of following Jesus, is the only love worthy of the name. So, we are not talking about romance, sexual attraction, infatuation, or a vague substitute for “like,” as in “I love pizza.” Nor are we talking about charity, kindness, or enjoyment, as in our “love of nature.”

Jesus shows, as He tells, that the entire Torah is being fulfilled in His service to His people, which His foot-washing highlights and illustrates. The duty to love is not new, so the “New Commandment” is a love which transcends duty on its way to delight. This love is never begrudging or bitter.

Jesus-Love is neither the slavery of co-dependency nor the thrill of philanthropy. It is the self-conscious, joyful laying aside of my temporal comfort for the eternal good of others, which can happen only when God’s people know who they are, know what they are doing, and why. It is love which humbly and purposefully observes, then serves. John 13:1-35

**The Application: Take relationships seriously.**

Jesus-Love is the ultimate outreach plan! It is so different from other loves that people notice, and Jesus promises they will. This kind of service involves faith, reflection, humility, joy, resources, time, energy, accommodation, and touch.

1. Jesus-Love is rooted and grounded in knowing who we are.

Our identity in Christ frees us from the fear of losing because the risk of losing is gone for one “already dead” (Galatians 2:20). We are free from sin and the Law’s curse in Christ. Romans 6:5-14

2. Jesus-Love is the motivation for doing good for others.

We don’t “find ourselves” by loving. We validate our in-Christ selves by loving. Romans 13:8-10. We do not serve others from fear of hell, but joy in the Spirit. Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 8:1-4

3. Jesus-Love is experiencing people as life, not interruptions.

We can be as begrudging or generous with time and energy as we can with our money. The test is a heart that treats people as God’s image-bearers, not projects or afterthoughts. Eph. 5:1, 2; 1 John 3:16