

Sermon Seeds – Questions for the week

May 15 – John 13:31-35

1. Read through the Gospel. What do you see as the main theme/s?

2. Put yourself in the scene. What does it feel like?

3. What instruction is given?

1. According to Jesus in John 13:34-35, what is the result of loving one another as he loved us? How is the pattern of Jesus' love radically different from the pattern of love the world displays?

2. Jesus compassionately calls his disciples, "children". What does this reveal about the heart of Jesus for your doubts and your needs?

3. How is your love for Jesus *sacrificial, inclusive, and confrontational*?

4. "When crisis comes, Jesus ramps up his compassion and clarity." We are all in a season of crisis, if we are to love like Jesus that means that compassion and clarity should increase also. Where can you grow in compassion towards your neighbor right now? Where can you grow in clarity as to why being a Christian matters?

5. We all struggle loving others like we should. What are some practical ways to work on our love for others?

Here are some ideas I had:

Write down some goals every week on how to show love to those around us. Evaluate at the end of the week.

Practice purposely reaching out and showing love to those who can't possibly repay us.

Asking our close friends and family what are some things we can do to show our love to them more.

Memorize these verses on love and recite them to ourselves every day.

6. "To decide to follow Jesus is to give people permission to occasionally hurt you." People are terrible replacements for Jesus. That doesn't excuse abuse and misuse of authority, but it also puts Jesus in the position to be the Person you actually need. Where have you seen Jesus heal hurts from other's harm?

The glory of Jesus has come; and that glory is the Cross. The tension is gone; any doubts that remained have been finally removed. Judas has gone out, and the Cross is a certainty. Here we are face to face with something which is of the very warp and woof of life. The greatest glory in life is the glory which comes from sacrifice. In any warfare the supreme glory belongs, not to those who survive but to those who lay down their lives.

(ii) In Jesus God has been glorified. It was the obedience of Jesus which brought glory to God. There is only one way for a man to show that he loves and admires and trusts a leader; and that is by obeying him, if need be to the bitter end. The only way in which a child can honour a parent is by obeying him. Jesus gave the supreme honour and the supreme glory to God, because he gave to God the supreme obedience, even to a Cross.

(iii) In Jesus God glorifies himself. It is a strange thought that the supreme glory of God lies in the Incarnation and the Cross. There is no glory like that of being loved. Had God remained aloof and majestic, serene and unmoved, untouched by any sorrow and unhurt by any pain, men might have feared him and men might have admired him; but they would never have loved him. The law of sacrifice is not only a law of earth; it is a law of heaven and earth. It is in the Incarnation and the Cross that God's supreme glory is displayed.

(iv) God will glorify Jesus. Here is the other side of the matter. At that moment the Cross was the glory of Jesus; but there was more to follow--the Resurrection; the Ascension; the full and final triumph of Christ, which is what the New Testament means when it talks of his Second Coming. In the Cross Jesus found his own glory; but the day came, and the day will come, when that glory will be demonstrated to all the world and all the universe. The vindication of Christ must follow his humiliation; the enthronement of Christ must follow his crucifixion; the crown of thorns must change into the crown of glory. It is the campaign of the Cross, but the King will yet enter into a triumph which all the world can see.

Jesus was laying down his farewell commandment to his disciples. The time was short; if they were ever to hear his voice they must hear it now. He was going on a journey on which none might accompany him; he was taking a road that he had to walk alone; and before he went, he gave them the commandment that they must love one another as he had loved them. What does this mean for us, and for our relationships with our fellow-men? How did Jesus love his disciples?

(i) He loved his disciples selflessly. Even in the noblest human love there remains some element of self. We so often think--maybe unconsciously--of what we are to get. We think of the happiness we will receive, or of the loneliness we will suffer if love fails or is denied. So often we are thinking: What will this love do for me? So often at the back of things it is our happiness that we are seeking. But Jesus never thought of himself. His one desire was to give himself and all he had for those he loved.

(ii) Jesus loved his disciples sacrificially. There was no limit to what his love would give or to where it would go. No demand that could be made upon it was too much. If love meant the Cross, Jesus was prepared to go there. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that love is meant to give us happiness. So in the end it does, but love may well bring pain and demand a cross.

(iii) Jesus loved his disciples understandingly. He knew his disciples through and through. We never really know people until we have lived with them. When we are meeting them only occasionally, we see them at their best. It is when we live with them that we find out their moods and their irritabilities and their weaknesses. Jesus had lived with his disciples day in and day out for many months and knew all that was to be known about them--and he still loved them. Sometimes we say that love is blind. That is not so, for the love that is blind can end in nothing but bleak and utter disillusionment. Real love is open-eyed. It loves, not what it imagines a man to be, but what he is. The heart of Jesus is big enough to love us as we are.

(iv) Jesus loved his disciples forgivingly. Their leader was to deny him. They were all to forsake him in his hour of need. They never, in the days of his flesh, really understood him. They were blind and insensitive, slow to learn, and lacking in understanding. In the end they were craven cowards. But Jesus held nothing against them; there was no failure which he could not forgive. The love which has not learned to forgive cannot do anything else but shrivel and die. We are poor creatures, and there is a kind of fate in things which makes us hurt most of all those who love us best. For that very reason all enduring love must be built on forgiveness, for without forgiveness it is bound to die.