

Living in Incomprehensible Love!

6th Sun. of Easter – 05/05/24 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: John 15:9-17 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 9 [Literal Translation, where Jesus said to His Disciples on the night of His arrest,] **“Just as the Father loved Me, so also I have loved you. Remain (and live) in My love.”**

Introduction

⌘ “*Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me*” (LSB 683) – A love without any boundaries...what is that like?

→ Maybe that’s too deep; too much, too fast for us to contemplate. So let’s begin with a bit of a more basic question: What do you think of when you hear the word *love*? Do you think of a couple walking hand-in-hand on the beach or a bride and a groom all dressed up and making vows to each other? Do you think of Valentine’s Day with chocolates in a heart-shaped box or a dozen red roses or is it a warm fuzzy feeling in your stomach?

⌘ In our Gospel Reading today, Jesus leads us all to understand that if that is as deep as your thinking goes when you hear the word *love* then you are not even scratching the surface of what true love is.

→ Jesus though takes our hearts, minds, souls; our entire being by the hand here this morning and leads us down into the depths of true love so that we can fully understand both the source and the sustaining power of love, as well as the motivation of Christian love; that is the love that is modeled after the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. Jesus - love for the unlovable.

⌘ With Jesus, He says in verse nine that the proper understanding of true love begins entirely separated from you and me, even from this planet. It begins with God, the Father and His love for Jesus! “Just as the Father loved Me...”, Jesus says.

→ Already there, we’ve entered into the realm of what I’m calling “Incomprehensible Love”, because it is looking into a relationship that no human being can, or ever will be able to comprehend; the inter-personal relationship of the One True Triune God; the three persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, yet always and only One true God.

→ How is it that God the Father loves God the Son? They are undivided in their very nature even while they are distinguishable in their person. And already in saying that our measly human brains begin to hurt, right?

⌘ But suffice it to say that there is no love in the entire universe greater than the Father’s love for Jesus, His Son. And now Jesus says, “Just as the Father loved Me, so also I have loved you.”

→ So, what does this love that Jesus has for you and me look like? How would Jesus define that love? According to John 3:16, Jesus defined love not with words, but with actions: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

→ In fact, earlier, on the very same night of our text today, on Maundy Thursday in the Upper Room, as Jesus and His disciples were gathering to celebrate the Passover supper for the last time, John tells us in chapter 13:1 & 5, “Having loved His own who were in the world, [Jesus] loved them to the end. ... Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” So for Jesus, love meant that the very Creator of the Universe would bend down before those whom He created and serve them by washing their dirty feet. Incomprehensible, right!

✘ And that's not all of it. In 1 John 4:10 we are told, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (i.e. substitutionary sacrifice) for our sins." There you have it – that's taking us into the truly incomprehensible nature of God the Father's and God the Son's love.

→ First the fact that God the Father would even consider a sin-fallen, sin-corrupted world worth sending His only-begotten Son into to suffer and die for that miserable mess of humanity is beyond mind-boggling, isn't it?

→ And then that Jesus would willingly agree to die for us, whom Romans 5:6-10 describes as being "weak ... ungodly ... sinners ... and enemies of God." Incomprehensible!

→ I mean He loved you and me and all of mankind enough to put aside all of the glory and the riches of heaven, as the eternal Son of God, 1) to become a human being in this perverted and sin-corrupted world, and then 2) to actually become sin – that is He took upon Himself your sin, my sin and the sin of all souls ever to live on the cross. And 3) He then endured extreme torture; underwent more shame and ridicule than we can ever imagine, and 4) He then found "joy" (according to Hebrews 12:2) in being run through with spikes in His hands and feet; to hang on a cross and to die for you and for me!

→ Verse 13 in our text says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." Jesus did all of that for you. "Just as the Father loved Me, so also I have loved you".

✘ How does Jesus define love? It's about so much more than just words. To Jesus, love means "doing". It meant sacrifice; sacrificing His time, energy, personal comfort ... even sacrificing His very life for those who are unlovable. You and I will never be able to comprehend that love – never!

→ He said in verse 16, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you...". Remember, we, in our sin were weak enemies of God. We were dead in our trespasses and sin according to Ephesians 2:1. So even if we had wanted to, we couldn't choose Him.

→ And neither could His disciples, even though they sure talked as if they thought they could. Remember, they even said that night, that they would make any sacrifice for Jesus, even die with Him. But we all know how that turned out. Just like us, the disciples could certainly talk the talk, but when it came time for sacrifice; time to put their lives on the line, even their words failed miserably: "I don't know the man. I don't know the man! I don't know the man!" Peter said. No, Jesus didn't choose to love His disciples because they loved Him first. He chose them because He loved them "as the Father" had loved Him – unconditionally; incomprehensibly.

✘ And friends, Jesus chooses you – you who were no more lovable or reliable than Peter; you who also bail when it's time to tell your friends, right out loud, right there when others are mocking Him, "I love Jesus." Or when your family tries to guilt you into skipping worship for an event that can just as easily take place later in the day, or when your friend says that you can still be Christian; that Jesus "didn't really mean it" when He said that homosexuality or fibbing or having sex outside of marriage or cheating on a test is a sin and you don't speak of your love for Jesus, but just go along with them.

→ Yes, these are the times when our talk about loving Jesus is just as cheap as it was for the disciples in our text today. Let's just face the facts: we aren't lovable either, but Jesus said all the way to the cross and the grave, "I love you – your sins are forgiven." To His people in every age and time Jesus says, "I love you – here is some fish and bread"; "I love you – get up and walk"; "I love you – I lay down My life for you. You are My friend."

II. For Us – love is also about "doing"

- ⊗ So, dear friends in Christ Jesus, what is love to you now? How do you define love; knowing and believing that Jesus loves you with His incomprehensible love? Why do you and I love?
 - ➔ First of all, we love because God commands us to love. Jesus' word in verse nine that is often translated as "abide" is an imperative; a command. In the Greek it is "menō" (μένω) which means "to remain; to stay; to live".
 - ➔ So Jesus commands you and me to do the impossible; to "menō" in His love. It's not an option. He repeats it in verse 12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."
- ⊗ On top of that Jesus says that the way that His disciples love others – whether it's loving for selfish reasons like the rest of the world loves or loving others with Jesus' incomprehensible love – this is going to be how the world truly knows that they; that you and I are Jesus' disciples.
 - ➔ So how do we love? We love as Jesus loved; no small task. But this is what Jesus has made us to be and what Jesus gives us the ability to do – He gives us His incomprehensible love in our baptism; in His perfect Word; in His body and blood here at this altar. Why? To forgive us, yes; to make us His new creation and also to strengthen us so that we can now love the unlovable as Jesus has loved us; so that we can serve all people as Jesus has served us.
- ⊗ Yes, that means that we love by sacrifice. We love not just by words but by doing. We love by laying down our lives for others - not necessarily literally, because only Jesus could lay down His life to save others. But, as we give of our time, our comforts, the talents God has given us and our treasures, we are then laying down our lives in love for others.
 - ➔ What does this look like right here; right now? The options are too many to count, but for example, you walk or drive around your neighborhood; your community; you open your eyes and ears at work and school and within your family and you ask, "What is it that this person needs? What is he struggling with? How is it that she is hurting right now?" And then you ask God to lead you and help you reach out in love – even when the devil is tempting you not to, and you share Christ's incomprehensible love with him; with her; with them and with everyone else in between.
- ⊗ This is all included in the mission that Christ has given us here at Mt. Calvary, isn't it? What's our mission? *Sharing God's Word! Serving All!*
 - ➔ We want to practice a love that doesn't just desire but actually gives. We love, not to get something but to do something. So maybe, instead of saying, "I love you" to people, we should say, "What can I do for you?" After all, love without sacrifice is nothing.

Conclusion

- ⊗ There was a princess whose daughter was deathly ill with diphtheria. The mother was forbidden to kiss the child because of the almost certain danger of contracting the disease. In one of the many moments of pain for the child, this mother was so distressed that she took her daughter in her arms and soothed her into quietness. The daughter even looked up into her mother's eyes and said through her tears, "Mama, kiss me." This was too much for the princess to take. She took her child, pressed her against her body and kissed her. It literally was a kiss of death. But that's love – making the sacrifice without counting the cost.
 - ➔ Whom do you and I love? Anyone for whom we sacrifice is someone we love, starting with our spouses, our children, and our friends. And we can love people whom we don't even know. How many people donate money to bring relief to those caught in natural disasters? That is sacrificial love.

→ We also love the unlovable. We love those who do not love us. We love as we do deeds to help and serve others in the name of Jesus. We do it, why? because Jesus loved us first.

✘ Loving in this way – sacrificially as Jesus loved us is not easy. It's hard. It takes effort, practice, and concentration. It takes open eyes and ears to know the needs of others. But we can all do it – every one of us, for two reasons.

→ First, because Jesus has first loved us in His incomprehensible love, and second, because, by His power and grace alive and active within us, we remain; we stay; we live in His love as we “love one another” (v.17). Amen.