

Wesley United Methodist Church

April 29, 2018

“How to Love.”

John 15:1-17

You can learn things by being around children. Here are some things a father learned:

There is no such thing as child-proofing your house.

You should not throw baseballs up when the ceiling fan is on.

A ceiling fan can hit a baseball a long way.

Glass windows (even double pane) don't stop a baseball hit by a ceiling fan.

Play-dog and microwave ovens should never be used in the same sentence.

Super glue is forever.

No matter how much Jell-O you put in the pool, you still can't walk on water.

Pool filters don't like Jell-O.

Always look in the oven before you turn it on.

The spin cycle on the washing machine does not make earth worms dizzy.

It will, however, make cats dizzy.

Cats throw up twice their body weight when dizzy.

A good sense of humor will get you through most problems in life. Unfortunately, mostly in retrospect.

Raising children has never been easy. It is life's most joyous task; it is also life's most demanding task.

Our text for today is filled with wisdom and instructions. The one verse that I have chosen comes from the 12th verse.

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” It's a short text, but it's a very powerful one for us all.

Love is not something you do when you feel like it. Love is a way of life. Love combines attitudes and actions, commitment and conduct. This is so important. Christ's command is that we are to love one another as Christ loved us. If you think about it, that is a demanding standard. That means that love is an action. How did Christ love us? He laid down his life for us. You and I would prefer to define love as a warm and fuzzy emotion. But you cannot command an emotion. If I held a gun to your head and said, “Get happy!” the best you could do is fake it. And even then, you probably wouldn't be very convincing. But Jesus is commanding us to love one another as he loved us. He isn't talking about an emotion. No, the love of Jesus is talking about a decision. It's a decision to humble ourselves. It's a decision to give up our own self-interests. It's a decision to let go of our own agendas. It's a decision to stay faithful, even in the face of pain. It's a decision to give of ourselves, even when we don't feel like it. This is the kind of love Jesus had for us, and it's the kind of love he commands us to have for one another.

Some people don't know how to love. This is why Jesus' commandment is necessary. Some people simply don't know how to love. This includes many parents. They didn't receive love when they were children and thus they have difficulty expressing love to their own children. They never received authentic Christ-like love. So, they don't know how to give it. Jesus commanded us to love one another as he love us. Some people do not know how to love. They pass on the love-deficiency that they learned as children to their children. They express love in inappropriate ways. So, Jesus commands us to love as he loves. We also know that love comes in many forms.

All of us—particularly children—need lots of physical interaction. We need to be touched. That is one of our most basic human needs.

A judge in Philadelphia, speaking of his experiences dealing with juveniles in trouble with the law, said that most of the young people who came before his court for discipline were hostile and aggressive. But their attitude didn't bother him nearly as much as the attitude of their parents. Often the child's father would be outraged: “Why do you do this to my boy?” he would ask. “Why bring him in here? Don't you know who I am?” “But,” said the judge, “never once did I see any of those fathers show any sign of affection for their teenagers.”

I don't have any scientific backing for this, but I would venture to guess that in homes where there is lots of affection expressed there is far less juvenile crime than in homes where affection is restrained. We need to know that love is a commandment, and one of the ways we love is to express affection.

Liberace was known to his friends as Lee. When Lee was a small boy growing up in Wisconsin, he had to play piano in beer halls to make money. His father was a very stern, somewhat humorless classical musician who insisted that Lee become a classical pianist. Lee reluctantly complied with his father's wishes. Finally, he was booked to play a classical concert and his father attended. Liberace performed at his best that night with an unusual flair. But when the concert ended and he turned toward his father's seat, hoping to see him beam with pride, he saw that the seat was empty. His father had walked out of the concert. When Liberace arrived home, his father berated him for acting like a clown while

performing great musical works. Liberace later said that his father's rejection that night was the greatest disappointment of his life.

Why are so many parents like that? You can see them at Little League games berating a small child for muffing a ground ball. You can hear them in public places dousing a teenager's dreams. Do they really think they are helping? Love is a commandment. It takes many forms. Love is affection, love is encouragement.

Love is also setting moral guidelines. People need a moral compass. That means instilling a sense of right and wrong in our children, not only about big issues, but also day-to-day matters. Moral training of children takes work. It takes time. It takes patience. That's why love is a command. We are to pay the price of helping young people to grow morally, emotionally and spiritually. One unknown mother put it this way:

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper—not a homemaker.

If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness—not godliness.

Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window.

Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.

Love is present through trials. Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive.

Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddlers, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.

Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart.

Before I became a mother, I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.

As a Mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.

This is a mother who loves as Christ loves. Love is a command, not a feeling.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."