

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 14, 2017

“When the Golden Rule isn’t Enough.”

John 15:9-17

Today we honor our Moms. Not everybody can be a mom, but everyone at some time in their life had a mom, and at that time our mom was the most important person in our world. Some of us had moms who made great sacrifices in our behalf. We are profoundly grateful for that. So today we honor our moms.

Some helpful person has made a list for men—a list of “What NOT to Buy Your Wife for Mother’s Day.” I realize this is a little late notice, but just in case any of you men were planning on running out to Wal Mart this afternoon, this might help:

1. Don’t buy anything that plugs in. Anything that requires electricity is seen as practical.
2. Don’t buy clothing that involves sizes. The chances are one in 7,000 that you will get her size right, and your wife will be offended the other 6,999 times. “Do I look like a size 16?” she’ll say. Too small a size doesn’t cut it either: “I haven’t worn a size 8 in twenty years.
3. Avoid things that are useful. The new silver polish advertised to save hundreds of hours is not going to win you any brownie points.
4. Don’t buy anything that involves weight loss or self-improvement. She’ll perceive a six-month membership to a diet center as a suggestion that she’s overweight.
5. Don’t buy jewelry. The jewelry your wife wants, you can’t afford. And the jewelry you can afford, she doesn’t want.
6. And guys, don’t fall into the traditional trap of buying her frilly underwear. Your idea of the kind your wife should wear and what she actually wears is lightyears apart.
7. Finally, don’t spend too much. “How do you think we’re going to afford that?” she’ll ask. But don’t spend too little. She won’t say anything, but she’ll think, “Is that all I’m worth?” Good luck, men.

The Scripture chosen for today, is John 15:9-17. You may follow along in the pew Bible or just listen to God’s word.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you...”

You’re mature enough in your faith to realize that God doesn’t have a gender. God is spirit. God is neither male nor female. This is one time when it would be most appropriate to substitute the word Mother for God rather than the word Father. In light of this special day, it makes much sense to read our lesson like this: “As my Mother has loved me, so have I loved you. You will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Mother’s commands and remain in her love. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you...”

William Thackeray said, “Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of children.”

We love because God first loved us. That’s the message for this day. In the passage, Jesus goes beyond the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule says what..?

That’s right... “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” In this passage, Jesus makes it clear that we are not simply to love our neighbor as we love our self; we are to love our neighbor as Jesus loves us. That’s a different and much more difficult standard.

You see, our own human love is always conditional, transient, selective.

Today we may love someone because he or she is loveable or perhaps they act loveable toward us. But then we withdraw our love when we feel wronged or cheated. And, suddenly, love is replaced by a need for vengeance. Just as damning, often we only love those people who are like us who share our background, our status, our values; who are talented and gifted and dress appropriately.

Jesus’ love, on the other hand is for all people. And it’s sacrificial.

What love is sacrificial? Someone said, “It’s getting out of a warm bed on a cold winter’s night and filling hot water bottles for sick children.” That sounds like a voice of experience.

Love is sacrificial. Even though we may not feel we are sacrificing anything at the time. None of us if we are healthy emotionally, love our children as we love ourselves. We love them far more than we love ourselves. The Golden Rule is insufficient for the relationship of a parent and a child. We love our children as Jesus loves them. Our love can never measure up to God’s love, of course, because we are human, but we love them more than we love ourselves.

One morning in 2012, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, city transit driver Kris Doubledee, made an unscheduled stop on a busy street corner. The passengers all watched him as he got out off the bus and approached a man on the sidewalk who was barefoot. Doubledee asked the man if he had any shoes; the man said no. So, the busdriver removed his own shoes and

handed them to the man. "Here," he said. "You need these more than I do." Then Doubledee returned to his seat wearing no shoes and continued on his route. A passenger asked him why he done that. Doubledee explained that he'd seen the man standing there before and just couldn't bear the thought that the man didn't have any shoes.

Gee, we say that's the sort of thing Jesus would do. Yes, and that's the sort of thing a follower of Jesus might do. After two thousand years of Christian history, that shouldn't be such a radical thought, but it is. We claim to follow Jesus, but we often forget to live as Jesus commanded us to live.

There was a story in Reader's Digest some time ago. It was written by a woman from Rhode Island. She wrote that only three times in her whole life she saw her father cry. The first time she saw him cry was when she was seven. His mother, her grandmother died. The second time she saw him cry was at the airport when her brother departed for Vietnam. The third time she saw her father cry was when he was in his 80s. Her mother, in late-stage Alzheimer's resided in a nursing home. Her father had visited her mother, his much-beloved wife, daily for ten years except for the time when he broke his foot.

After his foot healed, he returned to the nursing home. It seemed like such a long time since he had seen her. He said, "I thought Mother forgot me, but when she saw me, she smiled and said, "I love you." Then the daughter said, her father sobbed.

Some of you understand those tears. We know a little bit of what it means to love as Jesus loved. We love those closest to us like that. The question is, can we enlarge that circle of love? That is what Christ is asking us to do.

Actually, Jesus gives us two commands in this passage. The first is to remain in his love. Where do we find the power to love as Jesus loved? We find it by remaining in his love. We read in verse 9 & 10, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."

In verse 12 Jesus gives us that second command. It is that we are to "love each other as he has loved us." This command is linked to the first which is to remain in God's love. When we remain in God's love, that love will motivate us and give us the power to love others.

We love because Christ first loved us. And unless we have Christ's love in our hearts, we simply cannot love others who are outside of our circle of intimate relationships. We simply do not have the power to love as Christ loved us unless we have Christ's spirit within us. Then and only then can we fulfill his command to love others as he loved us.