



Sermon Growth Guide

January 24, 2020

Here We Go! - Love Like Jesus

1 Peter 1:22-2:10

Key Verse: 1 Peter 1:22 “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.”

Big Idea: Value #4 Love like Jesus: Live for others, even when it takes sacrifice.

Foundations

This week we look deeply into value 4 of **The First Pres Way - 7 Values in our Pursuit of Jesus**.

Love Like Jesus.

How can we love like someone who was perfect? Jesus tells us in John 13 to love others as He has loved us.

Scripture is clear. We cannot do the things we are called to do in our own strength. Because self-love is so powerful, loving others deeply requires a strength we do not have. The good news is that Jesus has promised His Spirit to love within us. The Apostle Paul then frequently tells us that Christ lives in us and we live in Christ. That means that we can love, not with our own emotions, but with the power and will of Christ who is in us.

Gathered together with your circle, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your spiritual formation, enabling you to let go of yourself in the name of Jesus for the sake of others.

Understanding God's Word

In 1 Peter 2:1, what are we told to give up so that we can love others? Why do you think Peter has chosen these particular behaviors as acts which prevent loving others?

In 1 Peter 1:22-25, Why do you think that after telling us to love others, Peter then reminds us that we have been born again? He doesn't say, "You have been saved," which is true, but describes our salvation as being born again.

What does the reminder that that we are mortal, but that God's word abides forever have to do with loving and living for others?

Applying God's Word

Our passage closes out (2:10) with the reminder that we have received mercy from the Lord. Mercy is a tangible act of love for another. Where in your life do you see a need to extend mercy to another?

Witnessing God's Word

In this passage, believers are called living stones who find their strength by their relationship to the Cornerstone who is Jesus. How do you demonstrate that your life of love is made possible because it has a solid foundation? Pray that you would be freed from love of self so you can love others. Thank God for this infinite love He has shown you in Jesus.

In the words of the Beatles, “All you need is love.” Well, I don’t know if it’s all we need, but it sure is a need. As we keep moving with our **Here We Go!** series, renewing our commitment to the **First Pres Way: 7 Values in Our Pursuit of Jesus**, today we talk about the fourth value for our church, **Love Like Jesus: Live for others, even when it takes sacrifice**. How did Jesus love? He loved by giving Himself away.

How do you know you are loved? I come from a generation that passed notes in school. It was a rare day I didn’t see a note passed in class, and a rare week I didn’t get one or send one. That was how you did it back then. You wrote a note to a girl, and said, “Do you like me? Check A for Yes and B for No.” Then you’d wait. I got too creative once and made one of those folding finger puzzles with a whole series of questions for a girl I liked. I sent it off. I waited. Three days later, no reply. So I went to one of her friends. “What’s up with Robin, didn’t she get my note?” “Oh yeah,” her friend said, “She threw it away. She said, ‘too many questions.’” Luckily, I wound up with someone else who doesn’t mind all my questions. How do you know you are loved? How do you love others?

COVID has revealed cracks in our lives, hasn’t it? Actually, for each value there is a corresponding crack in the foundation that COVID has revealed. Value one, **Live for God**. COVID has exposed the false gods in our lives we were trying to worship. Two, **Hold Fast**. COVID has made people question their intellectual foundations and look for something more solid. Three, **Keep Growing**. COVID has humbled us. There’s so much more out there to learn and so much more out there we don’t fully understand. I better keep learning, keep growing. Well, today, **Love Like Jesus**. COVID has exposed just how critical relationships are, just how critical love is. Love is not an add-on; it’s a necessity. Our Deacons

and Caring Ministry have made 16,600 calls since COVID started. Deacons have spent almost 2,000 hours connecting with church members. We need connection. We need love. Monday (January 18), on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the communications team asked me about a quote I’d like to put out from King. I chose something he said in a sermon on loving your enemies: “That’s love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There’s something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.” (Martin Luther King Jr.) The only way forward is love. Love is what we need.

So far, 1 Peter has defined us as worshipers with one true God to offer our heart of praise. Peter has challenged us to Hold Fast to Scripture and to Keep Growing and learning, pushing out any remnant or shadow of deception we might have picked up. Now the letter takes this turn: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22). The church is characterized by love. Not superficial love either, but true love, from the heart. The love we practice and live into as followers of Jesus is founded in something solid, something from outside of ourselves, something eternal. It’s founded in God’s Word, in Jesus, in the eternal life that only the Word of God can bring. Let’s have a look.

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22). Now that you have obeyed the truth, meaning you have responded to the Gospel, you have believed in Christ who died for you and rose from the dead, you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, so now



you have a new love for others who have been through the same kind of thing, but go deeper. Now, love one another deeply, from the heart. How are you going to do that? What does it mean that you go deeper? Three things you have to think about to go deeper in love: **(1) Truth is in order to love, (2) You are a living stone in a spiritual temple, and (3) Jesus Christ himself is our cornerstone.**

(1) Truth is in order to love. People like to set truth and love in opposition as though if you are committed to truth you can't be very loving and if you are very loving you can't be committed to truth. They are not in opposition. Look again: "by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other." Truth leads to real love. It makes sense. You can't love a lie. You can't love a false representation. In human relationships, if someone presents a false version of themselves and you fall in love with that, is that true love? No. Don't go all "Bachelor" reality show on me! You know that's not true love. It isn't. The one doing the loving is loving a false picture of the person, and the one getting loved really doesn't feel loved because he or she knows that the thing the other person is loving is not really them but a fake, a mask, a farce. I feel like a Shakespearean character in *Twelfth Night* now. The only way to true love is through truth.

Truth is found not in the passing, perishable things, but in the eternal Word of God. The Word that spoke creation into being is also the Word that speaks to you to make you born again into eternal life. "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). This is where truth is, and so this is where love finds its true foundations. If you want deep and true love, continue to root out hypocrisy and fake fronts and masks and tricks

and crave the Word as deeply as a baby craves milk. "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Peter 2:1-3).

(2) You are a living stone in a spiritual temple. How do you go deeper in love in Christian community? Recognize that you are being built into others, and others are being built into you. "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). This is a beautiful image of Christian love, and sometime we'll develop this more, but in short, if you are a rock about to be set in a wall to build a temple, you have to be chiseled and shaped to make room for the other rocks, and they have to be chiseled and shaped to make room for you. Chiseling isn't always comfortable, but the result is good. Worth it. We love more deeply when we realize we are built together as a family. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10). These others around you are part of you and you are part of them. You are a people. You are a temple.

(3) Jesus Christ himself is our cornerstone. The cornerstone was the first stone laid to begin to build the walls off in two directions, or three really, because you build up also. It had to be solid, it had to be unshakable, and it had to be true. Our love for one another builds off of Jesus' love for us. Because Jesus loves us the way He



does, we can love one another a little like Jesus. “For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame’” (1 Peter 2:6). This love of Jesus we model is not like romantic love, that, no matter how much we try always has a little selfishness in it. It’s not like friendship love that always wonders on some sinister level if this relationship is paying off, helping me at all, or giving me back as much as I’m putting in. It’s not even like family love, which can be solid, but can also be little more than a stuck, binding obligation. The love of Jesus is pure and selfless, creating value in the thing loved. Jesus loves us not because of what He gets out of it, but because of what He wants to put into it. Pure and giving. Upbuilding and creative. Love Like Jesus.

I remember when I was still a new Christian trying to figure out how to live in the way of Jesus. I was in college. I used to absolutely shame myself for not doing enough. I felt burdened that I didn’t pray enough, I didn’t read Scripture enough, I didn’t go to church enough. Good disciplines. Godly disciplines. The exact disciplines that must be taught and trained into the hearts of every follower of Jesus. But, as they say, I was trying to live for the acceptance of God instead of living from the acceptance of God. I went to Willow Creek and heard John Ortberg teach on love. He said he used to feel shame about his performance as a Christian. He said when someone asked him how he was doing with Jesus, he would immediately jump to how many times he read his Bible that week, or prayed, or journaled. Then he realized, the chief command of Christ is to love. It comes from something Jesus said just before He was arrested and killed: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are

my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35). Really, he thought, I should be examining my ability to love. How are you doing in your walk with Christ? Well, let me see. How am I doing at loving today? It changed my paradigm.

Church, how are you doing at loving today? To grow in likeness to Christ is to grow at love; Jesus loved like no other. “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). To grow in likeness to God is to grow in love because that’s the character of God. “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). So then, if we are so loved by God, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). How are you doing at love? How are you doing at loving your family and friends? How are you doing at loving your neighbor? How are you doing at loving your enemy (Matthew 5:44)? When we love, we display the love of God to the world. The only way forward is love. **Love Like Jesus: Live for others, even when it takes sacrifice.**

Love like Jesus. That’s a tall order. In Romans it says, “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). What love. What amazing love. That Christ would die for me when I was still in my disobedience and sin, running from God like a thief from the law, turned against God, declaring myself an enemy of God—then, even then, Christ died for me. Does it cost something to love selflessly? Does it risk something to love your enemies? Because He loves, we can love. Love Like Jesus.

