

Children's Moment

May 24, 2015

Title: We are to love others as Jesus loves us

Object: Jellybeans – variety of flavors with licorice

Scripture: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

This morning I have some jellybeans. As you can see, they came in many different flavors. There are lemon, cherry, grape, orange, and licorice.

Sometimes I give jellybeans to the children here at church and to my grandchildren. I give them away because I like them and I like to share. You may now pick a jellybean. One thing I have noticed is that when I allow the children to choose the flavor they want, some children are very picky about what flavor they choose. I almost always end up with licorice jellybeans left over when all of the other flavors are gone.

I don't know why children won't choose the licorice jellybeans. Maybe it is because they do not like the flavor. Maybe it is because they don't like the color. Whatever the reason may be, I always end up with licorice jellybeans leftover. Do you know what I do with the leftover licorice jellybeans? I eat them myself! You see, I love all flavors of jellybeans, even the licorice!

Sometimes we treat people the same way we pick jellybeans. When children play games, some children are always the last to be chosen. Maybe it is because they are just a little bit different. Perhaps they have a physical handicap or maybe their skin is a different color. Whatever the reason might be, the other children just won't choose them.

Have you ever been the one that wasn't chosen? It isn't a very good feeling, is it? We all need to remember that Jesus loves ALL the children and He said, "Love each other as I have loved you." Jesus loves each of you. Even if you are ever the one that is left out, don't worry; Jesus loves you just as much as

He loves the other children. He loves us all! You can love other like Jesus loves you.

Dear Jesus, help us to remember that you have told us to love one another just as you have loved us. Amen.

John 15:8-17

Love, Friendship and Fruit to God's Glory

Bearing Fruit

Let's begin by reading verses 7 and 8 of John 15. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

The connection between verses 7 and 8 is the glory of God. God receives glory when we pray according to His will and live bearing fruit for His kingdom. Reading verse 8 again, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." If we belong to Christ and abide in Him then we will be fruitful, our fruitfulness will bring Him glory and bringing Him glory proves we are His disciples. As I meditated on fruitfulness, abiding and glory it brought to my mind the question of the difference between "needs" and "desires".

God the Father and God the Son are one, but the Father poured out His love upon Jesus Christ as God incarnate. Jesus, as the God man, needed the love of God the Father to be able to fulfill His mission on earth. This principal is what Jesus gives to His followers. Jesus tells the disciples in verse 9, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." We cannot fulfill the mission God has given believers without the love of Christ that He pours into us. We need the love of Christ to live both spiritually and physically. I desire the love of Joyce and my children and grandchildren, and I have graciously received their love. However, I need the love of Christ in order to bring God glory. I can live in God's love with or without the love of my family and friends. This is why when we do not receive love from family or friends

or even with the death of someone we have deeply loved, we can find peace in and the love of Christ when we abide in Him. Christ for the Christian is as essential as the air we breathe.

Jesus says we are to **“Abide in His love.”** It is also a requirement that we love as He has loved us and the evidence of this is bearing fruit for His kingdom. It is not a requirement that we receive love from anyone but Christ. Our being able to love family and friends is the fruit of our love of Christ and abiding in Him.

Abiding in Christ is what produces glory for God and Jesus is clear in His instructions. Our living and obeying His commandments is evidence of our abiding in Him first and foremost. This is seen in what Jesus says in verse 10, **“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”** Jesus says that He kept every commandment of God the Father while He walked this earth as He abided in the Father’s love. So, this applied to us - if we keep God’s commandments then we **“will abide in Jesus’ love.”** Keeping the commandments of God is impossible apart from the love of Christ and the power He gives to us by His love. Jesus says, **“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”** (v. 11) I do not see anywhere in Jesus’ statements that we will be **“happy”**. However, in abiding in Jesus, we will be filled with His joy to the full.

What is the level of joy in your life? Do you experience peace? Do you seek men’s approval? Do you seek contentment in material wealth? OR...Do you obey and live out His commands? If you live for His glory and not yours, what is the result? **“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”** (v.8) Our lives should be marked by glorifying God and bearing fruit. How are you doing?

How is Canyon Bible doing?

Love and Friendship

There is something charming and appealing about the word “friend.” God has built in us the desire for friend relationships. When we look back over our past we can mark major times in our fondest memories by the friends we shared these experiences with. We can think of our friends from grade school and then high school, college, our first career position. We shared important moments in time, such as marriage, children, camping, vacations, hunting, reunions, etc. I remember with fondness great adventures from my younger life--not always well thought out and some we were lucky enough to live through. But, what about the important times in your life, time more important than any physical experience, the turning points and great memories because of what Christ did in your life? Do you remember and talk of these as much as your experiences with people?

It is this understanding of human nature that is the context of what Jesus is teaching in the next few verses. People need people, but relationships will never be what they should be if we first do not have a relationship with Christ. Jesus says, **12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”** This is in stark contrast of life as believers living for Christ’s glory and those lost to the world.

The world of the lost is self-seeking and disoriented in choosing a path of relativism. We hear of the graying of America, but it is not that the baby boomers are getting

older, in truth; it is that there is no longer black and white, right and wrong. God's word speaks in terms of black and white. The Bible is absolute in what it teaches and it is unconcerned with political correctness. God's word is unafraid to confront people's sin and to speak of the reality of their hopeless condition without Christ. The Bible is clear as to who is saved and who is lost. Those saved belong to Jesus and those lost are against Jesus. Luke records Jesus' clear statement, "Whoever is not with me is against me." (Luke 11:23) The scriptures are also clear as to who are the children of God and who are of the devil. The Apostle John wrote, "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:10) Is your living righteous? Do you openly love your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Beginning in verse 12 Jesus adds depth and definition concerning those who are His friends and those who are friends of the lost world. Friendship with Jesus results in a personal and intimate relationship with God. Please turn in your bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3, and let these words sink into your mind, heart and soul. These words give the believer the greatest of all hopes and assured promises. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, **7** so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **8** Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see

him, you believe in him and **rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**" (1 Peter 1:3-9)

This is the reward for believing in Jesus Christ and being counted as His friend, abiding in His love and living for His glory.

On the other hand friendship with the world means one is an enemy of God and all He has declared holy. James declared, **"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."** (James 4:4) The prophet Nahum wrote of the wrath awaiting unbelievers saying, **"The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies."** (Nahum 1:2) There is no middle ground we belong to Christ or to the devil.

Jesus relates what He was about to do for those God has called saying, **"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."** (v. 13) From a human point of view this is a tremendous sacrifice; the giving of ones life to save another. However, it really does not express well the depth of the sacrifice Jesus made so that millions upon millions of people, generation after generation would be reconciled back to God. Jesus' friendship is a sacrificial friendship that He offers without cost us. Jesus put the interest of mankind before His own. That is a true friend. This puts verses 12 to 14 in perspective. Reading beginning in verse 12, **"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you."** Even the fallen world pays honor to a soldier in battle that sacrifices himself to save others and yet the world has no honor for Jesus who came to save the world. As Jesus told Zacharias, **"For the Son of Man came to seek and**

to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10) The whole world is born lost and Jesus comes that those the Father has chosen from eternity past may be saved.

In John 15, Jesus reveals four characteristics of those who are His friends: they love Him, love each other, obey Him and know the divine truth of the scriptures. We have already explored Jesus’ love for us. Also what it means to be His friend and love Him. Now we explore the connection between verses 12 and 14.

Jesus said in verse 12, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you ... and in verse 14, You are my friends if you do what I command you.” As Jesus taught the disciples on this last evening before His crucifixion giving two commandments “love one another as I have loved you” and “do what I command you.” Sounds simple, but for saved sinners it can be daunting. Believers are not to just love one another but they are to love “as Jesus loved you.” To be honest we can strive for and gain ground in loving others with agape love by Christ power and this is the goal – sacrificial love for others, but the only person to ever have loved with true agape love is Jesus.

In verse 14 it is clear that sin is to rebel and be disobedient to the commands of God. Remember when the prophet Samuel rebuked Saul for failing to do as God commanded. Saul did not utterly destroy everything of King Agag of Amalek and kept the spoil and animals. Saul tries to say he was keeping them to sacrifice to God. Samuel told Saul, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:22-23) So, since all sin is rebellion against

God then to turn from sin means to be obedient to God even when we desire not to obey. Obedience and faith are closely linked together in the scriptures. Paul gave praise to those in Rome, “Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, **18** and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. **19** I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.” (Romans 6:17-19) Obedience to Christ brings sanctification of our lives.

If Jesus had said, “if you want to be my friend do as I did,” in verse 14, all would be lost. We cannot live a perfect life, love others perfectly and die as the atoning sacrifice for mankind. Jesus instead said, “do as I command you.” Which is still a tall order to fulfill. Jesus knew how hard it would be for us to turn from sin and this is exactly why He gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit – it is still hard but not impossible. When the rich young man balked at what Jesus requested of him the disciples said to Jesus that they had given up much to follow Him, and He told them it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven. If salvation is that hard – they asked Jesus who could hope to be saved? Jesus responded, “**With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.**” (Matthew 10:27) Our salvation is totally dependent upon Jesus and we have no credit in our salvation. There are a number of verses where the different apostles record the equating of believing, faith, obedience and fruit bearing to be intertwined and they cannot be separated. All must be focused on Christ and from a relationship with Him comes true faith. Jesus was teaching and the crowd said to Him that His mother and brothers

were outside wanting to see Him. Jesus responded saying, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” **34** And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! **35** For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:33-35) Believing and faith are evidenced by obedience to the will of God. Whoever does the will of God is the brothers and sisters of Christ.

Friends of Christ

In chapter 15 the Apostle John speaks of believers as friends of Jesus and the only other place in the scriptures is where Abraham is called a friend of God. Abraham’s relationship with God was open and intimate. God spoke freely to Abraham. He opened His mind, God shared His plans and purposes with Abraham. Remember the conversation between God and Abraham just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Just prior to His conversation with Abraham on the destruction of Sodom He said He would hide what He was about to do from Abraham. But then instead revealed what He was going to do and Abraham interceded because of Lot.

Abraham talked with God. Communication is essential to friendship. Friends spend time together, speak to one another and share their lives with each other. Jesus is our Lord and Master, but He is more and this is what He is expressing in verses 15 and 16. Jesus says, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

Jesus says we are friends and not servants because He reveals to us all the Father has

revealed to Him. In normal human interaction friendships are a mutual decision. When two people meet if one or both are not attracted to each other no friendship develops and if they have had good upbringing they will be polite to each other. Only when there is mutual attraction does a friendship develop. But, here with Jesus it is different for it says that He has called us friends. By His great mercy He has chosen us to be His friends and He has given us a heart to desire Him. It is only after Jesus told His disciples that He was going to lay down His life so that the barrier between people and God would be removed that He now speaks of friendship.

Jesus chose us and reveals Himself to us that we may know Him and understand that He gives us this mysterious relationship of Lord and Master but also the intimacy of friendship. Jesus chose us as His friends, He reveals Himself to us and our response is to love Him and to bear fruit for Him. Verse 16 says when we are obedient to Christ we will abide in Him and our fruit will abide in Him. As friends of Christ, He reveals Himself to us and we grow in our knowledge of Him. It also becomes obvious He already knows everything about us.

As we gain understanding of our friendship with Christ we see the privileges of our friendship in terms of a life of fruitful service to Him. Verse 16 ends with Jesus saying, **“I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”** The problem is that Christians can become content with a little fruit because it is easier. But remember what Jesus said in verse 8, **“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”** Jesus did not say we are to bear a little fruit, but **“much fruit”**. Do you believe this? If so then we are called to strive and work and serve to bear much fruit and much fruit will be borne because Christ lives in us. Do we desire that God receive a little glory or much glory? Is our God not

the creator of the universe? He deserves all we can give and then more. Are we giving Him our all? You cannot change yesterday, but today is still before you and not finished – How will you serve God for His glory today?

In closing we will look at one way, for all believers, no matter what station in life they are at, can serve God for His glory. The end of verse 16 and on into 17 reads, **“whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”** This is speaking of prayer. We are to be involved in intercessory prayer for others. Jesus is saying whatever you ask in My name, My will – ask what I am commanding you – you will love one another. We are brothers and sisters and friends of Christ. Jesus is our vine and we are His branches. We need to spend earnest time in prayer for each other. We need to spend time in prayer seeking the Holy Spirit asking Him to keep our focus on Christ and not let the world invade. Prayer time must be spent asking that we be fruitful for our King by knowing His will and acting upon it. In Job we read, **“The LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends.”** (Job 42:10) It is not about material wealth, but the wealth that comes from being friends of Christ and the wealth that comes into our lives by having true friends. True friendship with Christ and people takes time and effort. What effort are you putting into your friendship with Christ? What effort are you putting into your friendships with brothers and sisters in Christ? You say, but I do not have true friends. Then begin to make the effort to be a true friend.

This morning we end by taking time to gather in small groups. Drag your chairs around, come together, hold hands and pray for each other. Pray that each of us and that all of us will be obedient to God and deserve His friendship and that we will do His will and bear fruit. I will call us back together to end in song.