

1 Samuel 20:12-17. ¹² Then Jonathan said to David: "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? ¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

Love one another.

1. Do not cut your love off from others
2. Show unfailing kindness like that of the LORD

What a weekend! The weather was just beautiful. What a welcome sight it was to see the snow melt, to see the blue skies, to feel the warm sun. What a welcome sight it was to see children playing outside and the people in town out and about. After a long winter when it might have seemed like we were cut off from the rest of town as we hibernated in our homes. What a welcome sight it was this weekend to see neighbors mingling with neighbors, waving hello, and crossing the road or making their way through their yards past the back alley in order to talk to one another.

God is pleased when we are kind to our friends and to our neighbors. Whether it is a beautiful spring day or not God urges us to be kind to each other. In our lesson for today He encourages us not to cut our love off from one another. But instead we are to show kindness and love to each other like that of our faithful Lord.

David and Jonathan were great friends. But at this point in their lives there was a very dark cloud hanging over their friendship. Jonathan's father was Saul, the first King of Israel, who had fallen out of favor in the eyes of the Lord because Saul had abandoned the ways of the Lord. The Lord was not with Saul. The Lord was with David, however. The Lord had Samuel anoint David as the next king. The Lord was with David, when this shepherd boy went out and fought and defeated the mighty

Goliath. The Lord was with David and blessed him with a growing reputation among the people. Saul was not pleased any of this. He became very jealous of David. He became so jealous of him that he wanted David dead. Saul tried to kill David. He ordered others to kill David. David had to flee for his life.

David was finally able to meet with Jonathan to discuss what he should do, but Jonathan was not yet convinced that Saul was really serious about these death threats. Jonathan wanted to believe that the tension between his friend and his father would pass. Despite his desire to put the best construction on his father's actions David's arguments won the day. And so Jonathan took his friend's word and promised to go and test the waters and see how his father truly felt about David. Jonathan also promised, regardless of whether the news from his father was positive or negative, to carry the news to David's ears so that David would live in safety.

Jonathan kept his promise and went to test the waters. He went to see how his father felt about David and for his efforts Jonathan got a spear thrown at him by his father Saul. It missed, but it of course demonstrated how much hatred Saul held in his heart toward David. Saul hated David so much that he wanted to kill anyone who sympathized with him or was associated with him. He was so filled with jealousy that he threatened his own son's life. And yet, because Jonathan cared about his friend Jonathan went to deliver the sad news to David. Despite the danger, despite the threat of death, Jonathan was willing to fulfill his promise to his friend. He would tell his friend that he was indeed in danger. Jonathan risked his life because he loved and cared for his friend. What commitment! What kindness!

Jonathan only asked for one thing in return, ***“But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live.”*** And later he adds, ***“Do not ever cut off your kindness from my family.”*** David would keep his promise as well. He was faithful and kind to Jonathan and his family. These two knew the love of the Lord and that affected how they acted toward each other.

How beautiful their example! How wonderful their kindness and love! But as I consider this example of love I must also consider how I have fallen short. How horrible that you and I often lack this kind of love and kindness! Instead of keeping our word we break our promises. Instead of helping our neighbor in his time of need sometimes we play ignorant to his or her troubles. We find excuses to shut be out, to be cold and distant and unkind. Instead of being kind to our neighbors and friends we pounce on any bit of juicy gossip. We spread rumors even about our friends and fellow believers. Instead of forgiving when someone wrongs us we hold onto that memory and we let it fester. It can even become a source of a personal squabble or maybe even a family conflict. In a small town I am sure that there are a

few cases of certain families that don't get along with other families because of something that happened years ago.

God does not want any of this. That is not how God wants us to treat each other, and thanks be to God that this is not how our God treats us. Think of the love of God. He has not cut off his love and kindness from us though he certainly could have. For not only have we failed to give God perfect glory and honor, we have dishonored him. By careless use of our tongues we have profaned the name of God. In our selfish pride we have placed ourselves over him as we did what we felt was right. We have tarnished his name. We have trampled on his reputation. We have wronged him in so many ways. He should look at all those sins recorded his perfect memory and he should say enough's enough.

He should take revenge. He should view us as insubordinate trouble makers that should just be done away with; and yet in his love, in his grace, he does not cut us off from his kindness. On the contrary he comes to us with his unfailing love. He is patient with us. He is kind. He does not keep a record of wrongs, but through Christ Jesus he has blotted out all my iniquities. And he promises that we who believe in him will never be cut off from his love but we will be covered by the sunshine of his grace, his undeserved kindness, for all eternity because the perfect love our LORD never fails.

Jonathan and David knew the steadfast love of the LORD. He knew their Bible History, so to speak. He knew that LORD had been with, Abraham and Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. He knew that the LORD had been with the Israelites and blessed them. The LORD had been with his people and rescued them. The LORD had brought countless blessings upon his people. The LORD had promised a coming Savior. The LORD loved his people with a steadfast and faithful love; even when they did not deserve it, God loved them. This love that they had been given by God enabled them to demonstrate such a wonderful example of kindness toward each other and others around them.

So no, it is not just bright skies and warm temperatures that motivates and compels Christians to love. The unfailing love of God is what truly moves us to love each other. That love of a faithful Lord, the steadfast kindness of our God, the undeserved grace of our Savior; that is what shapes and molds the love that we have for each other. Because we know the love of God in Christ Jesus we are able to patient, we are able to be kind and loving and forgiving with each other. The same Lord who compelled Jonathan and David to love and be kind to each other is the Lord who compels us. He has shown us the same consistent love that he had shown to David and Jonathan, and he has done something even greater for us. He has recorded for us the life of his son, Jesus. In the pages of those blessed Gospel accounts he shown us the love of Christ. God our Savior loves us with such a

constant and steadfast and faithful love that he came to this world to live for us. He came to this world to be our friend. He came to this world to lay down his life for us. He came to serve us. He came to save us. He came not for his benefit, but for ours. He came in love that this anything but self-seeking but completely selfless. This is the love of Jesus that molds and changes and affects the way that we love each other.

In the upper room on the night before he died Jesus gave his disciples, he gave his friends, a “new” command. He told them, ***Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*** ³⁵ ***By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*** (John 10:34,35). God has always wanted his people to love one another, but the command Jesus gave his disciples was new because now God has shown us, in such an unforgettable way, how we are to love. *As Christ has loved us, so let us love one another.* Jesus loved with a clearly selfless love. He did not show kindness to us because he knew it was worth his time or he knew that there was something good in it for him. As Paul says in the book of Romans,⁷ ***Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.*** ⁸ ***But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** (Romans 5:7,8)

Instead of approaching love in a self-serving way, instead saying what is in this relationship for me; simply consider the selfless love of Jesus. The Son of God came to help us and be our friend. Instead I thinking what is in this relationship for me, think this way, “How can I help? How can I be kind to my friends and neighbors? How can I share this love of Jesus?”

If Jonathan could risk his life or his friend we can be faithful and kind to our friends and our fellow believers. If David could forgive Jonathan’s family for the awful acts of Saul you as a Christian can let go of that grudge. If Jesus could forgive those that crucified him we can forgive those who harm us. Instead of holding on to petty grievances filed years ago let us forgive and show kindness and mercy to those who have wronged us. Instead of cutting off kindness from certain individuals or families let us think of the steadfast love of God so that we treat others like we would like to be treated – with genuine kindness and love.

As Jonathan acted in kindness to David, as David would prove his love for Jonathan, as Jesus has demonstrated his love for us, let us be kind to each other. This is your Savior’s will, his new command, ***“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*** Amen.