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Make his love known.

God is known for his great love.

As Christ loved you, love one another.

Just last week Pastor Tuttle from St. John's in Renville took a trip to the Holy Land. Some of you may have even followed Pastor Tuttle's trip to Israel on social media. And whether this is the first time you have heard of this trip or not, I think that many of us, might be very curious to see pictures or hear him speak about his trip. I, for one, am very interested in hearing and seeing more about this trip. I have never been to Israel, but I have seen such pictures on more than one occasion. And while there is certainly an ancient mystique to the land, it strikes me that this isn't the breathtaking mountains of the upper northwest. Israel isn't the untouched natural beauty of the Alaskan wilderness, the tropic palm trees and haunting brilliance of volcanoes on Hawaii it is not. It is not a modern must-see city with impressive skyline or unique atmosphere the likes of New York City or Paris. In fact, the country of Israel is rather small (the whole country of Israel is significantly smaller than the state of New Jersey) and relatively unspectacular in landscape and beauty. But yet, year after year, people willingly line up to fly halfway across the world to go to this place. Even when there is political turmoil that regularly threatens travel, people still go, some people go back again and again to this small arid land on the other side of the world. Why? What makes this place so great?!

It is great because this is where Jesus walked. This is where the Son of God healed the sick and proclaimed forgiveness. This is where the Son of Man suffered and died for the sins of the world. In short, this place, the Holy Land, is great because of the love that was shown there.

The glory of our God is found in his great love for us. He loved us so much that he came and lived and died for us. That's what makes God so great. He came to this earth for us. Born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth he walked the land that we aptly describe as holy. He tread on the paths that led from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and out to Bethany and Capernaum, he walked the road up to Jerusalem proclaiming the message of salvation and he made the sad trek out of the city and up Golgotha to suffer as the sacrificial payment for our sins. He came to this little slice of land called Israel and there he lived and died in love. But his love, of course, is not only tied to one location or limited to one place. His love is not only found on the shores of the Sea of Galilee or up on the Mount of Olives or resting upon

Mount Calvary, but His love is here. His love is here in the word and in the sacraments. It is here in the good news of the cross and the empty tomb. And our Savior encourages and commands us to love each other so that in this way also his love may dwell among us. He encourages us to love one another so that his love may spread from place to place and, more importantly, from person to person.

Dear children of God, love one another. As Christ has loved us so we ought to love one another. May this be our focus as we go out from this place today. **Make his love known.**

1. God is known for his great love. 2. As Christ loved you, love one another.

Our lesson takes place at this pivotal time when the ultimate display of Christ's love was taking shape. Judas had left the upper room to carry out his evil role and Jesus was well aware that all the pieces were now falling into place and that he was about to suffer and die for the sins of the world. The culmination of God's plan of salvation was coming to fruition, and so in that upper room Jesus brings this to his disciples' attention. The Lord Jesus spoke to his disciples saying, ***"now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him"***. The next few days, the next few hours, would epitomize and serve to define the greatness of God. God was willing to become one of us. In his great love he was willing to give his life for ours, he was willing to be handed over to death so that we might have eternal life. This is what makes our God great. This is what God is known for and why he is so greatly honored and revered. This is what makes the LORD worthy of praise by so many billions of Christians throughout the centuries. In love He would lay down his life for us. This is his glory, this is his fame; that he would take on the shame of the cross, that he would be betrayed and crucified to pay the penalty price for our sins. ***"Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him"***.

The Father's glory is tied tightly to the glory of the Son. As Jesus leaves that upper room and would soon be forced to climb Calvary it may seem like the Son, and therefore the Father, too is dishonored and put to shame. However, Jesus knew that this will surely serve to bring glory to God, and so Jesus assures his disciples that though things may seem dire and awful and shameful, this will be for the glory of God. This will be for the highest glory. The events themselves would lift up Christ's suffering and death above any other event in human history. By the end of his suffering a Roman centurion would acclaim Jesus as the Son of God, a thief who hung next to Jesus would be converted and eternally saved in his dying hours, and nature itself would testify to the greatness of these events: the sky would go dark, an earthquake would shake this holy ground, and the dead would be raised. The accounts of all that would happen to Jesus have been preserved and passed down and are so memorable that it is all widely regarded as the greatest true story ever told. In love he dies. In love he rises from the dead. His love is made known; and it is glorious!

This is the greatness of our God, the greatness of his love for which believers will sing the praises of God for all time. God, the Father sent his Son to die for the sins of the world. God the Son endured the death we deserved. And God the Spirit, by his grace, drives this good news into our hearts and brings us to faith as he fills us with his love. God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - planned out and carried out this plan of salvation in His great love for undeserving sinners like you and me. This is what makes God great. This is the incredible love that has been made known to us, that fills us, and this is the love that we want others to know and have as well.

And so the Holy Land is rightfully regarded as a very special place because of that love that God showed there. I hear it is quite the experience to go to Israel to walk in those places, to see those locations. But Jesus makes it clear in his parting words that it is the love of God, it is his love, the love of Christ, that was most important. Jesus wants that love to dwell in and be apparent in the lives of his disciples no matter their location. The disciples would not always have Jesus with them, and so they were reminded that it wasn't so much about the location or their proximity to Jesus or that they were in the same zip code or walking on the same dirt and dust as Jesus, but what mattered is that they walked and lived in the love of Christ. What mattered was that they remembered this glorious love that God would show to them in Jesus and that they would continue to live in this glorious love of Christ.

And so Jesus looks upon his beloved disciples with eyes of love and says to them, ³³ ***“My children, I will be with you only a little longer... A new command I give you:”*** Jesus had been teaching them many things. He had been instructing them for roughly three years. But during that time he had also been demonstrating perfect love for them. He had also been showing them love; acting in love for them. He had been guiding them and tending to their needs, watching them grow in their faith and in their ability to share the message, to be his disciples, to be his apostles who would be sent out with the message of salvation to make his love known to the ends of the world. And this new command he gave them was to love one another, a command that God had always called forth from his people, but the new wrinkle would be this, ***“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”***

Love one another. In this place we are in general proximity of each other. We sit and stand next to each other in church. We come here to learn about God, we come here to glorify Christ together. But what is location if there is no love? What is general proximity if there is no love? This church is more than a gathering hall or community center, that person who is next to you, who is a few pews down from you, is your brother or sister in Christ. Jesus calls his disciples to love one another. He wants us to love all people, but there is a special bond that is created through faith. Our Savior brings us together into his family, into his church. But we are to do more than to love the church that he has brought us into, Jesus wants us to love, to act in love toward the individuals in this family of believers. Dear children love one another, show love to one another. Get to know your brother and sister in the faith. Spend time with each other. Love each other. Help one another in times of need. Pray for each other, encourage each other.

How beautiful it is when this command is carried out! Praise be to God for believers who love one another and care enough to visit another hurting soul. Praise be that God for the Christian who acts in love as he or she picks up the phone and calls that fellow believer on the phone when he or she is going through a difficult time. Christ is there as his children love one another. Christ's love is even on display when a fellow believer and neighbor comes over and shovels snow or tends to some yard work for another believer who is physically unable to get to those chores. Christ is there when we love one another. Christ is there when we are patient with each other and kind to each other. Christ is there and his love is on display when we forgive each other and rejoice together in the truth of God's Word. Christ's love is on display and Christ's command is followed when we love one another and show love to each other.

But this isn't always the case, is it? Too often we treat each other coldly. We confess that we are brothers and sisters in Christ but we treat one another like strangers, or worse. We might profess that we love our church and yet at the same time we fail to show love to the individual members of this congregation. We might even treat each other harshly. Instead of dwelling in the love of Christ and letting the love of Christ dwell among us hatred is housed here and discord is put on display. Quarrels are fueled within this family of believers, grudges are held and tensions build and dwell among God's people. This does not make the love of Christ known, instead it serves as a stumbling block, an obstacle, that keeps both those inside this congregation and outside this church from knowing the love of Christ, as our risen LORD desires.

Hear the command of your Savior. ***Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*** Remember his glorious love for you. Remember that it is Christ's love that brings you here today and binds you together with your fellow believers each and every day. Hear of your Savior's extraordinary kindness! Listen to the good news of his grace. Be filled with his love and let that love flow through you. Dear Christians, love each other, as Christ has loved you, so you too ought to love one another.

And as you do so, recall that this love of Christ is more than a feeling but Christ's love takes action. Love each other in word and deed, in emotion and action. Husbands and wives love one another. Care for each other, put the needs of your spouse before your own. Parents love your children and take care of their needs in love. Children love your parents, listen to them and obey them. Christian, love your neighbor, love each other and show love to your fellow believer. Love one another as Christ loved you. Help each other. Encourage one another. Be willing to act in love even when it is difficult. When it is necessary to rebuke one another, do it in gentleness and love.

Jesus says to his disciples, he says to you, ***“As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*** Jesus is known the whole world over for his love. Jesus is known and glorified for his greatest display of love: his death on the cross. And yet his love was a self-less, self-sacrificing love of action long before the cross. Jesus not only showed his love for his disciples on the cross, but he also displayed his love for them in the way that spent time with his disciples, walked with them, talked to them. Remember how he was kind to them and cared for their needs. I'm sure Peter would never forget how Jesus went and visited his mother-in-law when she was sick. Matthew would probably be quick to tell you how Jesus went and spent time with him and ate with him and gave him a chance when no one else would give a good-for-nothing tax collector the time of day. As Christ loved, let us love each other.

Not everyone can take a trip to the Holy Land, but one of the great things about our God is that Christ is not just in some far away land but he is present wherever his love is. Christ is here with you when his word and sacraments communicate his love. Christ is here when in faith you put his love into practice. We experience his love as we love each other. Christ is on display and his love dwells among you when you live for him and love each other as Christ has loved you.

That's what makes this place, and our faith, and our God, and our Savior great: Love. We rejoice that the love of Christ is displayed in the cross and the empty tomb; and we rejoice as the love of Christ is put on display in our lives of faith and kindness and love. As Christ loves us let us love one another. Amen.

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