

*John 13:31-35. <sup>31</sup> When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. <sup>34</sup> “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

### *Love One Another*

- 1. Know the Love of Christ*
- 2. Make the Love of Christ Known*

They had spent a good amount of time together, and they had grown fond of each other. The teacher cared about his students. The students had appreciated their time with the teacher. But now their time was growing short, so the teacher began to speak words of genuine concern and care for these who were dear to him. He wanted so deeply for his students to remember and apply what they learned.

Imagine if you will, such a scene... I don't think we have to close our eyes and imagine; we don't even have to look too far or think too hard to come with such a scenario. On that night in the upper room, on the night that he would be betrayed, on the night that he instituted the holy supper, Jesus spreads out this feast of final instruction that is so wonderfully fitting for you to hear about today on your confirmation day. It is certainly fitting for all of us to remember as well - no matter the day. When his time was short, when he wanted to speak a simple yet powerful message that his disciples could hold onto and treasure forever, this is what he said, **“Love one Another, as I have loved you so you must love one another”**.

Right now, your head might be swimming with bible passages and facts and teachings that were taught and given to you and now as they rumble around through that twin brain of yours some will come out of his mouth and some will come out of yours. Or the other extreme is taking place because of the pressure of the moment and you are fighting from freezing up and your mind seems to be going so blank that you can't think of anything. And so, in these restless and perhaps anxious moments, this is the memorable message that Christ your Savior invites you to receive and recall, ***As I have loved you.***

Dear confirmands, dear fellow Christians young and old, *know*, recall, and celebrate the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is the glory of his name, isn't it? For you

two and for all of us. Jesus, God's own Son, came because of God's glorious love. *Jesus loves me this I know*. This is something that we learn from little on. This is why we sing his praise and glorify his name. This is why we take time to hear his Word and learn about his word on Sunday mornings, and all these Sunday and Wednesday afternoons in confirmation class leading up unto this day. ***God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*** God gave himself to save broken and fallen sinners. The Son of God becomes the Son of Man and gladly went about this all-important work to fulfill the Father's plan and to bring peace between a holy God and shameful law breakers and offenders. Jesus humbled himself by taking on our human flesh, so that he might live under the law perfectly for us and to give his life as the perfect sacrifice for all sin. God promised such a plan of salvation all throughout the Old Testament. Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist had all pointed towards the fulfillment of the promise, and now the One God had sent and had chosen was about to go about the crucial moments that would secure our eternal redemption.

And so on this night of great significance, on this night that the betrayer leaves that upper room, the gears of the salvation clock pushed on towards the fulfillment of God's promised gift. As the betrayer left the upper room and Jesus turned to instruct his disciples concerning these defining moments. As our Savior and our substitute, he would pay the price that we could not. And there was no other reason for any of this than the incredible love of God. The love of God was not just an empty sentiment or a distant feeling, but his love took action. The Son of Man would give his life as the all atoning sacrifice for sin, and every sin would be paid for in full. This love of God took action to save us, because there was nothing, there is nothing we could do to save ourselves.

Throughout his teaching Jesus would make this clear to the Jewish leaders and his disciples alike, and it would be no different in those final moments of instruction. <sup>33</sup> ***“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.*** Where he was going his disciples could not follow. For as Jesus approached the altar of the cross, he was doing something that none of us could do. He was approaching the holy God with the absolutely perfect sacrifice of his spotless life so that the sins of the world could be blotted out and washed away once and for all in the blood of the Lamb of God.

We too covered this extensively in our study of God's Word. Right away the commandments convict and convince each of us personally. I can't come to the altar of God with my offering of love, because it is grossly inadequate and so is yours. We hate instead of love. I want others to love me, but I am cold and indifferent. Each of us is selfish. We fail to love God as we should. We do not love our neighbor nearly as much as we sinfully love ourselves. Each one of us can be terribly manipulative. We think and talk about people in unloving ways. We show favoritism. We are mean and unloving to the people closest to us. Love for parents, for friends, for spouse, for

children, for neighbor, its all lacking - some days it is far worse than others. Our love is often shallow, empty, a shell. We might say things like, *I love my neighbor, I love my wife, my children, my brother or sister, or fellow believers*, but so often we do nothing to show it. This is the only offering of love that our hands and hearts made filthy by sin could produce, and if that is what we present before God, why would he ever welcome us into his presence. He should strike us down dead in our sin, cast us out from his presence forever.

But in his great and abounding mercy the LORD provides for us a way to dwell with him now and forever in heaven. In his perfect love that is his fame, the LORD God sends his Son to exchange his offering for yours and for mine. In love that takes action, our great high priests steps into our existence, steps into our place, steps into the Most Holy Place of Calvary and God is pleased with his Son's sacrifice and through the Son he is pleased with us. In love he goes through hell for us. In love for sinners the Son is separated from the love of God and then brought back into God's favor, he suffers, he dies, and rises again so that we could live in the love of God now and forever. Jesus would die for us our sins, God's anger over sin is satisfied in his sacrifice and God would raise Jesus from the dead to give and assure all those who believe in Jesus that we have life and peace in his name. His disciples would search for him, but he would not be found in the tomb, because death would not hold him. Peace and victory and salvation would be found instead.

Like a soldier going off to war, Jesus enjoys a final meal with his family, spends some final bittersweet moments with his children and then with a thoughtful heart he leaves with them some final words of love and instruction. ***Where he was going, they could not follow***, but as he speaks tenderly to his children he gives them their marching orders. ***A new command I give you, as I have loved you so you must love one another.***

Jesus was going off to war, he was going to battle the deadly blows of the devil, the heavy burden of sin, the vile hatred of wicked mankind, death and hell itself, he would endure that all for we could not. He would endure and defeat that all so that we, his dear children, could live, in freedom that he has provided. Our redeemer lives, he won the victory, and he has set his children free.

Through his work he would set us free so that we might live in the freedom that he provides. By his gifts of Word and Sacrament he has made us new, washed us clean. Through his gift of faith, he has sanctified and set us apart to live for him who died for us and was raised again. And so because he kept the law for us perfectly, because he laid down his life as a perfect sacrifice for sin, because he does everything necessary for our salvation, he gives us this new command. ***Love one another.*** What is really left for us to do, but to love as he has loved us? In gratitude for his free gift of salvation we are now called to love each other as he has loved us, so may we love one another.

And now his command to love is not a command that condemns, instead since I am set free and so filled with his love that it is who I am. You and I know his love. You

and I have been changed and transformed by his love, and as his redeemed children we will gladly make his love known in the way that we demonstrate love to others especially to our fellow believers, to our brothers and sisters in the faith.

*As I have love you, so you love one another.* Remember and cherish and live these words of Jesus. Saved by his love, we are filled until overflowing with his love. As his love took unmistakable action, let our love for each other stand out as special as unique. This is who our God is. This is who God has made us to be. This extraordinary love is to what sets us apart as Christians. Love one another.

What will this look like? Jesus encouraged his disciples to put their love into action among one another. Dear brothers and sisters let us put our love into action. Care for each other's needs. Speak in love to one another. Forgive each other. Show a desire to come together like the family that we are. Savanah and Payton, you are a part of this family. As members of this family of believers gather in this house of worship. Love the bond of fellowship that you have been given. Love your church. Love these people and the people that share your faith. Pray for each other. Visit with one another. Come together and be renewed in his love. Support the gospel ministry among this family of believers, so that the love of Christ may be communicated to young and old alike for this generation and the next. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Encourage one another with hymns and psalms and spiritual songs. Stay connected and know that this bond goes beyond these walls. Members of Zion show interest in the newest members of your congregation. Greet them when you see them out and about. Encourage them to grow in God's Word. Encourage them to grow in their faith and the expression of their faith, in service to God and one another, and help them as you are able.

This love for one another put into practice includes the love of Christian admonition. Show compassion and care as you speak up to properly warn each other about sinful and faith eroding behavior. Rebuke with love if we don't see them in worship. Rebuke with love if they are straying away from God's Word or if any of your fellow believers are wandering from the path of God's ways.

In these moments of high importance, on this confirmation day, let us consider the love of God made known in Christ and let us consider how we make known the love of Christ especially in the way that we show love to one another as members of the family of God. In these moments of high importance, we take to heart this masterful lesson taught in such a simple and memorable way so that we can take it with us each and every day. ***Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*** <sup>35</sup> ***By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*** Amen.