

Grace and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so also I have loved you. Remain in my love. ¹⁰If you hold on to my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have held on to my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you these things so that my joy would continue to be in you and that your joy would be complete.

¹²“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this: that someone lays down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you continue to do the things I instruct you. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷These things I am instructing you, so that you love one another.” **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Friends,

Did you notice the one word that permeates this portion of scripture? The word **“love.”** Years ago the Beatles sang, **“All you need is love. Love is all you need.”** Love brings you everything you need and helps you to live a happy life or does it? We might be a little skeptical, especially if our lives haven’t always been filled with joy but as we consider this portion of scripture Jesus focuses in our need for love – especially his love for us. It is that love of Christ for us, that saves us and then shapes our lives and all that we do. So, as we consider the words of our Savior, we want to see how he encourages us to, **“Remain in His Love.”**

I. “¹⁰If you hold on to my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have held on to my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” It almost sounds like Jesus is asking us to do the impossible but the key to this verse is his relationship with the Father and the impact it has on our lives.

The Father’s will for his Son, Jesus, was for him to humble himself, to come into this world and live a life of perfect obedience to his Father, and then to pay for all the times when we are disobedient. And that is exactly what Jesus did – because of his love for his Father, his perfect obedience and because of his love for us.

And now he tells us that in order to remain in his love we are to hold onto his commands – we are to hold onto his Word which tells us about all he has done for us and his Word is there to guide us in our lives. One of our confirmands this morning, chose Psalm 119:105 as his confirmation verse, **“Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”** That fits well with what Jesus is trying to tell us as he encourages us to remain in his love by looking to his Word to assure us of Jesus’ great love for us and then to try and follow his commands because **our Savior wants only the best for our lives.**

II. “¹¹I have told you these things so that my joy would continue to be in you and that your joy would be complete.” There are a lot of things in this world that can bring us joy and yet the joy we get from the world only lasts for a short period of time.

The joy that Jesus is talking about in this verse is an everlasting joy that comes from knowing all that Jesus has done for us and continues to do for us. There again, he takes us back to the cross and his great love for us as he took our punishment upon himself and he brings us the benefits of his work through faith. That brings great joy to my heart and I would hope to your also.

Last week we heard about the Ethiopian treasurer who felt the joy Jesus is talking about and rejoiced as the Holy Spirit worked in his heart to give him the gift of faith and the gift of baptism. This morning we will rejoice as our two confirmands publicly confess their faith in Jesus as their Savior. The joy of salvation is a joy that lasts not only while we are here on this earth but it is a perfect joy we can look forward to in heaven. Jesus wants us to have this joy that comes through faith in him.

III. “¹²“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this: that someone lays down his life for his friends.” There it is again – to love as we have been loved by Christ. We see the love of our Savior every time we look to the cross where he lay down his life for us. So how do we love in the same way? How do we follow this command? The answer is simple – to forgive as we have been forgiven – but the application is a lot harder.

It’s not always so easy to forgive, especially when the other person feels no remorse. It’s not always so easy to love someone when you get nothing in response. Yet we have to remember that we aren’t always repentant of our sins and even though our Savior loves us greatly we don’t always show any love for him but he loves us anyway and forgives us. It is the love of our God that motivates us to try and love as we have been loved and to forgive as we have been forgiven. That is why our Savior encourages us through his Word because he knows we will struggle with this command and yet as we love and forgive we will have the peace and joy that he wants us to have.

IV. “¹⁴You are my friends if you continue to do the things I instruct you. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you.” Wow! To be a friend of Jesus! We are not just a slave following the master’s every command but we are a friend, listening to our Jesus, our best friend, as he tells us about how he loves us and cares about us and is there for us.

We all have best friends but even our best friends fall short at times and might disappoint us but Jesus doesn’t. He never disappoints. He is always there for us and even wraps his arms around us and gives us a loving hug through his Word when he knows that is what we need the most.

And he continues to talk to us through his Word, to encourage us and to help us through life's struggles because that is what a friend does and Jesus does it perfectly for us – sticking with us even when we don't always want to listen. He never gives up on us.

V. “¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷These things I am instructing you, so that you love one another.” Jesus chose us even when we didn't want to be chosen. He chose us to be part of his family and adopted us through the gift of faith. And so, as a member of Christ's family, we want to “bear fruit.” That takes us back to the whole theme of this section – to love one another as Christ has loved us and to remain in him. That is the fruit he wants us to bear – the fruit of showing Christian love.

So, what do people see as they look at your lives. Do people see the love of Christ in what you do and the joyful way in which you live your lives? I would hope they do most days – yes, I know there are days when we get up on the wrong side of the bed and are grumpy all day long and the joy seems to be missing, but we are not perfect yet, nor will we be perfect until we are home in heaven.

But even as we live our lives on this earth I would hope and pray that people can see Christ in our faces – not because we are perfect but because of our confession of our faith, our confession of our sins and the joy that comes from the wonderful words of absolution.

And with forgiveness, we receive strength and joy to live and love again today - more Christ-like and more joyfully than yesterday. Even though our love is imperfect, Christ's love for us is always perfect and we can remain confident in his love.

Always live each new day to reflect his love. And as we do that then people WILL see Jesus in our face! Amen.