

*Sermon: Loving and Being Loved*  
*Text: John 15:9 – 17*  
*Date: May 17, 2009 AM*  
*Place: Jesup First UMC*

Every morning, Ruth makes the drive across town to the nursing home. Even though, it's only a 10 minute drive, it seems to take a lifetime. You see, Ruth is going to see her mama. At first, there were just minor changes: a forgotten name or a brief lapse in memory. But then, the doctors diagnosed Alzheimer's or at the very least Dementia. She took care of her mama at home for as long as she could, but slowly but surely Lynne slipped away.

And now, even though Lynne doesn't recognize her anymore and seldom says a word, Ruth goes to the nursing home to take care of her mama. Then, one day, she walked in and bent over to kiss mama on the forehead and Lynne looked up and said: "*Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.*"

No one could seriously read the Gospels without coming away with a profound sense of the love of God. In fact, throughout the writings of John, we come to know Jesus as the perfect reflection of the love of God. It is John who tells us: "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.**" So, we aren't surprised that as Jesus gathered with His disciples on their last night together, He spoke to them about love. He said: "**As the Father has loved me, I have loved you. So live in my love. If you obey my commandments, you will live in my love ... love one**

*another the way I have loved you. This is what I am commanding you to do.*

*“Love one another the way I have loved you.”* Now that’s a tall order, because I don’t think you and I can even begin to grasp the love Jesus has for us. No amount of encouragement or research can plummet the depths of His love. And yet, Jesus says, *“Love one another the way I have loved you.”*

Now friends, this is the center of who we are as a people of God; this is the center of who we are as a people called Methodist. For the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, wrote: *“And what is a Methodist but one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, who loves the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and loves his neighbor as himself.”*

So, I want to take a closer look at the love of Jesus this morning ... for in His love is an example for you and me to follow.

***First, God’s love is a Giving Love.***

You would have loved Mr. Tom. Tom Coleman was Mr. Avalon. And every Sunday Morning, he stood at the door with a hand full of bulletins and a pocket full of Bob’s peppermints. And all the kids would get out of their cars and go running up to Mr. Tom with their hands out. It was the most remarkable thing to watch: a grey haired old man standing in the middle of a bunch of kids. And there stood Mr. Tom with the biggest smile on his face, because he loved giving to “his kids.”

One day, Jesus said: *“If you fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does*

*your Heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to His children.*” Paul said: “Every good and perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of Lights.” John said: “From Him we have all received grace upon grace.” So truly, everything we are and everything we have is a gift of a loving God.

God’s love gives!

***Second, God’s love is a Sacrificial Love.***

The thing about God’s love is: He doesn’t know when to stop. God just keeps loving and love, even when it costs Him everything. Paul told the church at Philippi: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing.” In other words, He sacrificed the riches of heaven for us. And not only that, but He laid down His life as a sacrifice – the perfect sacrifice – for our sins. Jesus said: “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

God’s love sacrifices!

***Third, God’s Love is an Accepting Love.***

It’s a love that continually draws you in, closer and closer. Jesus said: “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are my friends.” You know, you can tell a lot about a person by looking at his friends. And just look at Jesus’ friends: tax collectors and sinners. Even among His disciples there was one who betrayed Him for 30

pieces of silver and one who denied knowing Him three times. And yet, Jesus never turned them away.

Jesus doesn't care who you are, where you've been, or where you think you're going. He loves you and accepts you as His own.

God's love accepts.

***Fourth, God's love is a Transforming Love.***

One day, a group of men brought the worst sinner they could find to Jesus. A woman had been caught in the very act of committing adultery. And so, they came and threw her at Jesus' feet and said: "*Well, Jesus. We caught this woman red handed, in the very act of committing adultery. Now, what should we do with her?*" And Jesus knelt down and wrote in the sand and then, He said: "**Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.**"

Now, most of us stop right there when we're telling this story, but there's much more to the story than that. Then, Jesus looked into the woman's eyes and said: "**Woman, where are your accusers?**" And when she looked around and saw that everyone had left, Jesus said: "**Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more.**" In just a few moments, Jesus transformed her from a broken, sinful woman into a child of God.

Listen friends, God's love accepts us just the way we are, but it won't leave us that way. God is in the business of transforming lives.

God's love transforms.

This is the way God loves us. His love gives; His love sacrifices; His love accepts; His love transforms. And if that's all the Bible told us, we could all be

happy. God loves us ... but Jesus didn't stop there. Jesus said: "Love one another the way I have loved you." And so, in these private moments with His disciples, Jesus was laying out very specific instructions about how we, as a church, relate to one another.

We are to give to one another until it hurts.

We are to sacrifice for one another.

We are to accept people just the way they are.

We are to be the kind of community in which and through which people's lives can be gloriously transformed by the love and grace of God.

Now, how do we do that? How do we build that kind of loving community? Two things:

***First, abide in His love.***

Jesus said: "I have loved you the way the Father has loved me. So, abide in my love." Live in it! Bask in it! Swim in it! Allow the love of God to permeate every part of who you are, because eventually you will become so full of God's love that it's bound to overflow into the life of those around you.

Abide in His love.

***Second, Obey His Commandments.***

Jesus said: "If you obey my commandments, you will live in my love."

The king of Armenia fell on his knees before the conquering Roman General. He said: "*Do whatever you wish with me, but please spare my family.*" Well, he did. The general was filled with compassion and allowed the king and his family to live.

Later, the king asked his wife, “What are your impressions of the General?” And she said: “I never saw him.” The king said: “You never saw him? How could you help but see him?” And with tears in her eyes, she said: “I saw only you, the one who loved me enough to die for me.”

O friends, let us so love one another that others might see Him in us.