

NOW – Loving Outwardly

Movies are filled with paradoxes – We think that a character is doing something out of obligation or fear only to find out it was out of love.

We find what appears to be a similar paradox in the life of a Christian when it comes to how and why we express love.

I want us to conclude our series on how God has called us NOW to move forward by looking at how we are to Loving Outwardly.

We've looked at how and why we need to have a Servant's Heart and moving that one step further with the Heart of a Steward (a godly servant that uses what's been given and entrusted to them with discipline and for a purpose).

The final expression of all of this culminates in loving outwardly.

I contend that serving others is the ultimate outward expression of God's love in us.

But I want us to realize that this is the end of the path – not the start.

Loving outwardly is the game piece reaching the end of the gameboard, not the beginning.

We need to see how this paradox of love works.

Matthew 22:37-39 – The two great commandments directly from the Lord Jesus' mouth about love.

- There's a lot packed into three verses, but I want us to look at the three people involved, so we can understand love.

1. Love the Lord thy God

Jesus tells us to love the Lord our God with every part of ourselves.

This is where many people disconnect the verse from the rest of what we know about God.

Why are we to love the Lord our God?

Many believe or at least behave as if we're to love the Lord with all that we are to gain His love. This is a dangerous belief. Why?

- With that thought, we serve the Lord, and we serve others in an effort to gain that love.
- Sometimes it's out of a misunderstanding of scripture, other times it's because of how we've been raised and have had to live to gain the love of our earthly father or spouse – so we just naturally transfer that thought on to God.
- This leads to never feeling good enough to be accepted, burnout, despair, feeling like we're on a hamster wheel never getting anywhere – can even lead to despising God.
- It causes us to be judgmental of other's efforts – comparison game.
- When we live this way, we're not really loving those we're serving, it's all really in an effort to win favor.
- This is a warped view of God – Wonderfully, it's not accurate.

So, why are we to love the Lord our God?

1 John 4:19 tells us, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

- We don't love the Lord because we're earning His love.
- Through His grace (getting what we don't deserve), He reached out to us in love – “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” **Rom. 5:8**
- But it's even more than that – Two times we're told in **1 John 4** that “God is love”
 - o Grasp that thought – It doesn't say that God loves – He is LOVE!
 - o Every essence of love is God
 - o Love is that attribute that is ever expanding – From eternity past God the Father loved His Son & Spirit – in a desire to express that love even more He created You and Me
 - o He did it even knowing that we would not all reciprocate that love – He loved us.
- It is for that reason that we are to love the Lord our God – He first loved us and out of that same love we respond to Him in love.
 - o Not because we owe Him, or we need to earn it
 - o He freely loves us and cherishes when we love Him in return.

- "...God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him". **1 John 4:16b**
- Everything grows from this thought.
- There are some here today that have never experienced that love. You may have heard of Jesus Christ, but you didn't realize the purpose of Christ's death on the cross.
- It was the action of our loving Heavenly Father providing a way of escape for each of us from the penalty of our sin.
 - God the Son, Jesus Christ – died in our place and if we will place our faith in Him, we will be saved – freed from our sin debt – born again
 - If you feel the Lord working in your life, I beg you to respond today.
 - At the end of our service speak to one of our altar workers.

We see we're instructed to love the Lord our God, but Jesus continued. In Vs. 39 He adds "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

What typically happens is we boil it down to love God and your neighbors, but that's not what it says.

What's it say – Love your neighbor as YOURSELF.

2. Love Yourself

That sounds wrong and opposite of other Bible teachings of denying ourselves, sacrificing and obedience, etc. But it's not at all.

We're to love other people like we love ourselves.

- This isn't conceit or vanity – The narcissism that social media has brought to a head – That's not love
 - That's vanity, pride, and lack of love – seeking attention, approval, or affirmation

Love for ourselves starts with knowing that God loves me for who I am – not what I can do for Him or what I can become – He loves ME!

Staff Bible Study – If all I had was God's love, would that be enough for me?

Are we willing to accept that God loves us for who we are? OR do we feel worthless if we haven't done this or that.

- I'm not saying we shouldn't better ourselves or that God won't change sinful behavior and develop our lives.
- We should have a self-respect and dignity for ourselves based off the fact that our Heavenly Father created us exactly the way we are.
 - o Our dimensions, Our aptitudes, Our handicaps, Our beauty
- We are His children having the dignity that we were created in His image (although tarnished by sin).

Not matter what people have told you, You have great WORTH and You are LOVED by the Lord and His church.

- This is important to realize because, we live in a society where:
 - o 83% people say there is No Meaning to Life
 - o 1 in 5 have No Friends
 - o 30% are Lonely
- We need a strong dose of God's love, so that we can love ourselves.

It is in both of those understandings that we reach –

3. Love Thy Neighbour

We don't love our neighbors as a task to do. It is the natural response to how we've been loved by God.

We are to be a mirror of how God has loved us to those around us.

If God loved us for who we are and not what we can do for Him, we are to do the same for those in our lives.

I have a love and dignity for myself based on the fact that God loves me and sees worth in me – I therefore love and treat people with dignity because I see the worth in them.

So, as a servant and steward of God – I will steward my time, talent, treasure, and testimony in a way that loves outwardly toward those God has allowed me to be part of their lives.

How do we as a church do that?

Eph. 4:11-13 – Vs. 11 lists different spiritual gifts given to each of us in the church.

- **Vs. 12** then tells us why – “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
- It is by using and developing our gifts and talents that we love outwardly.
- When each of us engages in using our abilities and gifts we can truly express this love in the way Christ desired for the church to work.
 - Perfecting of the saints – You are growing & discipling others
 - Work of the ministry – Reaching the lost and sharing God’s love
 - Edifying of the body of Christ – Sharing God’s love with each other

For the past four weeks we’ve spoken about Who We Are and What We Need to Be.

- This is not for me to keep you busy or for us to grow numerically.
- This is what we’re instructed to be.
- The Goal is to be more like Jesus – To do that we must mirror Him
- When we serve it is an act of worship – My hope is to see us love outwardly so that others will come to know Christ and begin developing their walk with Him AND That each of us will grow in our walk in the Lord.
 - When we don’t serve the Lord, we are less likely to share our faith and spend time in the Bible and prayer
 - In other words, we aren’t growing in the Lord.

Luke 10:2 – Jesus looked up at the seventy that He had sent out and said, “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

The prayer wasn’t for the harvest – that was a known need.
The prayer was for labourers to get involved in the harvest.

Step out in what you know to do now. God will guide and develop.

- Practically – We will be training for the engagement team

- We will provide instruction and training to disciple and be discipled
- We will demonstrate and show how to share your faith in your everyday life.

We must first step out.

John 14:21 – “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”

Jesus promises at the end of this verse if we will obey Him that He will love us and manifest (reveal) Himself to us.

He will become more real and show what He'd have you to do in your life, but we must first obey what we already know to do.