

One Another

Love One Another

August 16, 2026

Introduction

(TITLE SLIDE) I was reminiscing recently about my college roommates and how much I learned living with them. My freshman year at Furman, I was paired up with a guy from Long Island, NY solely because he, too, was attempting to join the tennis team. Other than that, we had absolutely nothing in common (elaborate).

So my second year, I went the other extreme and roomed with a friend named Warren. (elaborate). Despite my shortcomings, he agreed to join me and 2 others guys in an off-campus apartment for our last two years of school. After dorms and cafeteria for two years, I quickly learned everyone's shortcomings, quirks, and other behaviors that made life with them both hilarious and frustrating, depending on the day. But to this day, I would swear to you that those boys never washed a dish the whole time I lived there. And for whatever reason, dirty dishes sitting out or even in the sink just grate on my nerves.

So for weeks, I just lovingly put up with it. I washed everybody's dishes and put them away, every time, without commenting. But after a few weeks, I started to get bitter began noticing all the other ways those guys left messes around the house: dirty underwear on the couch, cheetos in the carpet, etc.

Finally I broke. I did their dishes and cleaned up after them one more time, but this time I printed signs and hung them up all over the house: WASH YOUR DISHES; PUT YOUR DIRTY CLOTHES SOMEWHERE ELSE, etc. No communication to them other than the signs. Of course, the signs did not work. They found them absolutely hilarious and were quick to point out all of MY shortcomings in the apartment.

Do you see the cycle here? In my self-righteousness, I think I have it all together so I mainly see only their shortcomings. I'm offended at their unloving behavior, and try to show them what real love looks like by serving them. The problem, of course, is that I wasn't serving them for their sake, but to validate my own self-righteousness. I wasn't loving them, I was using them to feel better about myself.

Segue

Today's message is the second of 5 in a series called ONE ANOTHER in which we are looking to better understand and practice how Christians treat one another, particularly within the context of the local church.

From Ephesians 5 last week, we learned that Jesus loves **the church**, Jesus gave himself for **the church**, Jesus is purifying **the church**, and Jesus cherishes **the church** for eternity. Given the way Jesus feels and has acted toward **His church**, it's clear we can't have a consumeristic, sentimental, "good vibes" relationship with the **local church**. We are called to love the local church in the same way Jesus loved the church..

But Jesus' love also informs HOW Christians treat one another within the church. We're going to hit four of those in our series, and the first one today is maybe the biggest but also the least surprising: ***Christians are to love one another.***

Body

Which is, of course, a patently obvious statement, so obvious that we might be tempted to take it for granted and skip to others. But in studying our passage for today, I'm suspicious that the church and the world have a more desperate need for understanding the love of God within the body of Christ more than ever. And I hope that when we look at this story and the conversations that take place in John 13, we will grow both in our understanding of God's immeasurable love for us and in our practice of love for one another.

Christ's Love for Us

So let's work our way through much of John 13 this morning. Look at the first few verses of John 13 with me. **(SLIDES)**

1 Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

3 Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God.

4 So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself.

5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

(TITLE SLIDE) The cultural and theological things going on in these 4 verses are truly astonishing and reveal so much about Jesus' love for us.

- The roads in Palestine were unpaved, and travelers wore open sandals. So, between the dust of the dry season and the mud of the wet season ... the sharing of the road with

livestock ... **everyone's feet were genuinely nasty**. So footwashing was a real problem, and every place you went (house, business, etc.) had a protocol for it.

- The host (homeowner, inn owner, whatever) would provide a basin of water at the door for whoever was coming in, and everyone would wash their own feet (albeit in the same water).
- While that was the norm, it wasn't the *customary* thing to do. The customary thing to do would be for the household to provide a servant to wash the guests' feet. However, foot-washing was the single most demeaning task assigned to a household servant. It was so degrading that many slave-owners wouldn't ask any of their servants to do it.
- Judaism pushed that even further. Rabbinic tradition held that Hebrew slaves were not required to wash a person's feet (only Gentile slaves).

So with all that in mind, catch the scene. **Jesus' disciples, with *nasty* feet, walk into a borrowed room to eat the Passover meal. So there's no servant to wash their feet, and apparently, none of the disciples felt the need to wash their own feet or volunteer to wash everyone else's.**

It gets worse. **Remember that they are reclining at a table to eat, not sitting. We sit up in a chair, and no one can see our feet under the table. They were reclining, each person propped up on their left elbow with his feet extended away from the food. So it's "feet out" all the way around the table for the duration of the meal.**

And it's in that moment that the RABBI ... the LEADER of these men ... the One who was truly the greatest among them ... who was also GOD in the flesh ... did **this**. Look again at vv. 4-5.
(SLIDE)

4 So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. 5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

Now, you're just thinking about the feet in v. 5, but it gets even crazier when you think about v. 4. By setting aside His outer robes and securing a towel to His waist, Jesus adopts the specific, recognizable dress of a common domestic servant. If you were in that upper room, you would have seen the **attire of a slave** before you even realized it was the **Rabbi** wearing it.

Don't miss this! The disciples maneuvered away from the basin and the towel for themselves or for Jesus. They would not in any way choose to come across as anything like a slave. Yet their leader ... their rabbi ... their teacher ... the one they all committed to follow ... their GOD ... "*assumed the form of a servant*" in both his presentation and his actions.

(SLIDE) And here is what Jesus' presentation and actions tell us about God's love: **God's love for us is sacrificial service.**

Our Love for One Another

And that sacrificial service doesn't just define God's love for us, **but it also defines the love of Christians for one another.** Look at vv. 14-15, and v. 34. *(SLIDES)*

14 ... If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

34 I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

The same sacrificial service that Christ displayed to his disciples in the foot washing (and ultimately in his death on the cross) **defines the love of Christians to one another.** And can I just say ... like Peter in vv. 6-9 ... "Mmmmm ... I don't know about that?" My heart, if I'm honest, bristles at sacrificial service. *(SLIDES as I say them).*

- **Loving in this way feels like it lowers our status.** In the church, we often struggle to serve because we fear that lowering ourselves to wash another person's feet will cost us our dignity or position. We want to be the ones recognized, the ones with influence, or the ones who are "seen."
- **Loving in this way is messy.** It is easy to love the idea of a church family, but it is incredibly difficult to love the reality of specific people when their lives are messy, their sins are public, or their personality quirks irritate us.
- **Loving in this way is inconvenient.** It disrupts our flow, it interrupts our plans, and it costs us our comfort. The act of stopping what you are doing, putting aside your own comfort, and contributing toward someone else's growth or need is fundamentally counter-intuitive. **(ILLUSTRATE WITH POST-DINNER RESPONSIBILITIES)**

Yet, when we look to Jesus for help and ponder His sacrificial service for us, it triggers the death of our pride replaces it with the joy of being like Jesus. And those we serve feel truly known and valued.

So when the people of Beech Haven love each other this way, we won't be a place where people compete for influence, mask their struggles, or posture for status. Instead, we become a safe and secure family where the pressure to 'keep up appearances' evaporates because everyone is looking for ways to serve rather than ways to be seen. We become a community of deep, resilient trust.

Our Love in the World

So, love is sacrificial service, modeled for us by Jesus and defining relationships in the church. But this kind love in the church between Christians makes a huge impact outside the church. Look at v. 35 with me *(SLIDE).*

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

(SLIDES as I say them)

- ***The world thinks love is tolerance.*** It often sees love as simply letting people do whatever they want without judgment. It keeps people at arm's length; it is a "benign okay-ness" that refuses to engage. **Biblical love is the opposite—it is active, messy, and intrusive. It is "washing feet," not just saying, "I'm okay with your dirty feet".**
- ***The world thinks love is tribalism.*** It often sees love as only possible when the people share the exact same moral and political convictions as they do. But the sacrificial, serving love of Christ is for everyone, **because everybody's feet are nasty.**
- ***The world thinks love is self-validation.*** It teaches us to look to relationships to "fill us up" or make us feel significant. It teaches us to use others to make ourselves feel loved, which really means that we're loving that they make us feel loved and not loving them for who they are. **But the love of Christ is genuinely about how we can help others grow by beholding the One who loved them perfectly.**

Therefore, genuine, sacrificial, servant love is a **magnet** in this world. Francis Schaeffer, a wonderful intellectual and apologist for the Christian faith, called this sacrificial service love "the final apologetic." **Our culture is drowning in cynicism, skepticism, and algorithm.** And while we will always proclaim biblical truth in all the ways we are able to communicate, John 13:35 has never been more true. **(SLIDE) A church that practices the sacrificial service love of Christ will reach the world for Christ.**

Conclusion/Application

But let's be honest: love within the church has often looked like love out in the world. **(TITLE SLIDE)**

- When love in the church is about tolerance, we keep people at arm's length to avoid awkward or difficult conversations or step into the mess of other peoples' lives. That's just like the world.
- When love in the church is tribal, it demands ideological purity from other people before it offers friendship. This makes the church just one more echo chamber in the world for someone else's voice and message.
- When love in the church is about getting validation, we use people as accessories to boost our self-worth, so that even our service is ultimately about us. That's using people just like the world.

So instead of seeing us as Jesus' disciples, the world sees us as disciples of the world. **No small amount of "church hurt" has happened because non-Christians were told "these people love each other" only to find them just as self-absorbed, just as guarded, and just as quick to leave as everyone else.** And some of them never came back.

Others stick around, but keep their distance, because they learned the hard way what it costs to believe a message like this. You see, v. 35 works in both directions. The love we have for one another is either the clearest evidence for Jesus this town will ever see, or it is the strongest argument against him. There is no neutral setting.

Oh that we would be a church that practices the sacrificial service love of Christ so that we can reach the world for Christ!

And if that church hurt lands with you, I'm really sorry. The church has failed you, but the good news is that Jesus never will. Look at Him. Look at Him kneeling before those who would betray him. He offers a love that doesn't use, manipulate, or abandon. You don't need to perform for him; you need only to receive what he did for you. If you are weary of the hypocrisy, I invite you to stop looking at the crowd and start looking at the Christ. He is the only One who actually lived the love we fail to demonstrate, and he offers you his life today.

When you realize that He knelt before you—taking your sin, your rejection, and your failures onto Himself, it changes everything. It kills your pride. It satisfies your 'hunger' for validation. It frees you to look at the person next to you not as a competitor or a consumer, but as someone for whom Christ died. That is the only place we can start again. We don't have to be the perfect church to practice this love; we just have to be a forgiven people who have experienced His love. Let's be that church. Let's be the community that finally shows the world that the only way to be great is to serve, and the only way to be loved is to be known by the One who loves us to the end.