“Love One Another”
John 15:17

A Sermon Delivered by
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Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

If you want to catch a glimpse of what popular culture thinks about a particularly subject, look at song lyrics. Today, we’re going to take a trip down memory lane, starting in 1938 when Judy Garland “wrote” a letter to Clark Gable:

*Dear Mister Gable,*
*I am writing this to you*
*And I hope that you will read it*
*So you know*
*My heart beats like a hammer*
*And I stutter and I stammer*
*Every time I see you at the picture show*

*You made me love you*
*I didn’t wanna do it.*

In 1956, Frankie Lymon & The Teenagers asked the age-old question,

*Why do fools fall in love?*

Elvis followed this line of thinking eight years later when he sang,

*Wise men say only fools rush in, but I can’t help falling in love with you.*

Just a couple of years later, the Beatles encouraged a young man:

*She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah*
*With a love like that*
*You know you should be glad*

In the same year, The Supremes gave us a glimpse of the other side of love, which really isn’t love at all.

*Baby love, my baby love*
*I need you, oh how I need you*
*But all you do is treat me bad*
*Break my heart and leave me sad*

In 1965, The Righteous Brothers sang what sounded like a romantic ballad, but the lyrics really talk about the loss of romantic love, hardly a romantic notion at all.

*You’ve lost that lovin’ feelin’,*
Now it’s gone...

Then came the Partridge Family who sang a catchy tune capturing the overwhelming fear that often accompanies the powerful emotion of love.

_I think I love you_  
_so what am I so afraid of?_  
_I'm afraid that I'm not sure of_  
_a love there is no cure for_  

In the mid-70’s, Captain and Tennille, encouraged many couples with their song, “Love Will Keep Us Together.” But apparently, love itself wasn’t enough because they divorced last year after thirty-nine years of marriage.

Then we moved into the 80’s. "What’s Love Got to Do With It?" sung by Tina Turner. Catchy tune, but listen to the lyrics:

_Oh what's love got to do, got to do with it_  
_What's love but a second hand emotion?_  
_What's love got to do, got to do with it_  
_Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?_

In her song, "Greatest Love of All," Whitney Houston sang:

_Everybody's searching for a hero_  
_People need someone to look up to_  
_I never found anyone who fulfilled my needs_  
_A lonely place to be_  
_And so I learned to depend on me..._  
_Learning to love yourself_  
_It is the greatest love of all_

In all sincerity, I ask, if loving yourself is the greatest love of all and learning to depend upon yourself is the way to go, why did she die of a drug overdose? And one might argue, but chaps, it’s just a song. Fair enough. But I have enough musical and life experience to know that an artist does not sing as passionately as she sang that song unless she truly believed it.

One of the more recent songs by Carly Rae Jepson reflects the deepest emotional need of humanity: love and acceptance.

_I really really really really really really like you_  
_And I want you, do you want me, do you want me too?_

With a few exceptions, almost all of pop culture refers to the romantic kind of love. It is passionate, intense and sexual in nature. Although this romantic love is important in the beginning of a new relationship, it may not last unless another kind of love adds to it. Because romantic love focuses more on self instead of the other person. If the person “in love” does not feel good about their relationship anymore, they will stop loving their partner.
John 15:17 records Jesus’ words: “This is my command: Love one another.” So what is this kind of love? It is an unconditional love that sees beyond all the quirks and flaws. Although you may not like someone, you decide to love them just as a human being. This kind of love is all about sacrifice as well as giving and expecting nothing in return. It is the kind of love that Jesus commands that we have for one another and for Him.

It is the love which Jesus exemplified: Accepting of us even though we do not deserve it and forgiving us when we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Before he gave his life on the cross, Jesus gave his life to anyone in trouble, hurting, lonely, scared, abused, broken, grief-stricken, cast off by society, impoverished, imprisoned, blinded, lame, diseased, or dying. To those who needed his words of comfort and wisdom. To those who needed healing. To anyone who needed his time and attention. Jesus gave his life to whoever was in need.

Christian love is not just the easy, fun stuff. To love as Christ loved means we are to engage ourselves fully in the really challenging, tough stuff of life. Why? Because that’s the way Jesus lived and died, and it is the way he commands us to live. It isn’t a feeling. It is an action. It is the act of self-giving.

Let’s do a little reality check here. I consider myself to be a pretty caring person, but I saw a t-shirt this week that really convicted me. I’ll let the words speak for themselves.

Love Thy Neighbor
The Homeless Neighbor
The Muslim Neighbor
The Black Neighbor
The Gay Neighbor
The White Neighbor
The Jewish Neighbor
The Christian Neighbor
The Atheist Neighbor
The Racist Neighbor
The Addicted Neighbor

What keeps us from loving like Jesus loves? If we show our love by standing by our African American brother or sister, are we afraid that others will think less of us? If we love the homosexual couple who lives next door, are we afraid others or God might think we compromising our beliefs? If we love our Muslim co-worker, are we afraid that we might be associated with terrorism?

In Matthew 19, we read of a rich man who asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life. Jesus told him to sell all his stuff and give money to the poor. The man went away sad because he didn't want to give up his stuff. I think the primary motivating factor in not loving others, as Jesus commands, is not wanting to pay the price required.
I officiated three weddings yesterday. During each ceremony, I told the couple that their rings are made of precious metal and they remind us that love is neither cheap nor common and love may cost us dearly.

Not wanting to pay the price because of fear, having to move out of our comfort zones or because we are greedy is what holds us back from love. And it is our lack of love that prevents us from truly being able to transform this world for Christ. We’d rather involve ourselves with some less expensive spiritual alternative like having a theological debate or writing a check. Now there's a time and place for that, but not to the extent that it interferes with actively loving others.

When the musical group Foreigner sang these words in the 80s, I highly doubt they considered God. But if you want to love as Jesus loves, consider these words:

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\begin{align*}
I \text{ wanna know what love is} \\
I \text{ want you to show me} \\
I \text{ wanna feel what love is} \\
I \text{ know you can show me}
\end{align*}
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And Jesus responds: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Amen.
Works Cited


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