

John 15.12-17—Love Other Leaky Clay Pots

- I. Introduction
 - a. “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.” C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves*
 - b. (The number board)—I, for one, am glad we don’t use this. I grew up in a SB church that was obsessed with numbers. Numbers, numbers, numbers. The convention will send every SBC church asking for a report of numbers. I am not saying numbers are bad but it’s very easy for people to become just a number. So, instead of saying, “our numbers were down today” let’s say “I need to check on so and so.”
 - c. We used to have these envelopes with little boxes to check. Whether we got anything from it our not, we had to read our Bible so that we could check that box. I know those things might help someone to learn discipline but it can be a very dangerous and empty task.
 - d. I want us to love the Lord and love people. I want us to be vulnerable and take down the walls we may have built to protect ourselves. I want us to open up and risk broken hearts. Jesus has poured his love into these disciples even though they were a clay pot with cracks and they would need to be continually filled. “Do not pour your water in leaky pots” did not describe Jesus.
- II. Main Point
 - a. In verse 12 and verse 17, this most important command marks off this section to describe how Jesus loved his disciples and how they ought to love one another as he loved them.
- III. Outline
 - a. The Single Command to love one another just as Jesus loved you
 - b. 5 ways Jesus loved his disciples
 - c. Now, how do we do that? An appeal to do SS differently
- IV. Exposition
 - a. Let’s take a look again at Jesus’ command to love one another.
 - i. Jesus has already said this in (Jn. 13:34-35) ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - ii. In our text this morning, he commands that they love one another two more times.
 1. If they want to hide their identity with Jesus after he leaves, then must simply not love each other. For these disciples to say they are disciples of Christ and then not love one another is to say that Jesus didn’t love them or teach them to love each other.
 - a. I suspect that someone will think love must just happen. Cupid’s arrow or I’m just not feeling it or isn’t love organic are popular ways of thinking about love.
 - b. None of those are necessary to love. Love is your commitment and response to others.
 - i. (1 Cor. 13:1-7) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice

- at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- ii. I heard a pastor say this one time: If I am training leaders and they are more interested in reading a systematic theology but cannot give someone a ride to church then there's a big problem. Actually, according to the passage above, he is nothing.
 - iii. One cannot love without truth but truth without love is worthless.
2. Obviously, he wants the world to know him. In fact, I believe that is what it means when John tells us that God is love. He did not withhold the greatest gift of himself from the world but rather made himself known!
- iii. We must not miss the fact that Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another just as he loved them.
 1. That would mean, how to love can be learned. Take note of Paul's instruction to Titus for older women in the church: (Tit. 2:3-4) ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children
 - a. My point is this: Older women were to train younger women to love their husbands and children.
 - i. This isn't just for women. I use this text because it is so clear that how to love can be learned. You can improve. It takes work. It must be modeled.
 - b. I think that gets us to the next point. Jesus describes 5 ways that he loved (and is going to love) his disciples.
 - i. The first one, he states is: (Jn. 15:13) ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.
 1. Did you notice what he did there? If you didn't know the cross was about to happen like these disciples, then you would hear this as a general statement. He didn't say, greater love has none of you than this, that I lay down my life for you.
 - a. That means not only is Jesus going to love his disciples like this but he expects them to love each other like this.
 - i. What does greater love mean?
 - ii. (Rom. 5:6-8) ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-- though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - iii. A question gets raised by all the commentaries. Isn't love for enemies GREATER for enemies than friends? The answer is, yes!
 - iv. But here the measure of greatness is in **the act** not so much who. It is love to be patient and kind but laying down your life is the ultimate level.
 - b. Does this mean we should be willing to die for each other?
 - i. I will give more examples later but let's see what it looks like in (1 Jn. 3:16-18) ¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (Here's what laying down our lives for the brothers looks like) ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against

him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

- c. In other words: Greater love has no one that this, that someone lay down his life for those he loves.
- ii. I didn't have verse 14 in mind as one of the five ways Jesus loved his disciples but we need to understand it because depending on how you take the "if" in that verse makes a significant difference.
 1. It's difficult to understand so let think through it. Jesus just gave this general statement that greater love is laying down one's life for his friends.
 2. Verse 14 seems to tell us who the friends are. "You are my friends if you do what I command you."
 - a. Does Jesus mean that these disciples must obey him in order to be his friends?
 - i. And as we know, the previous verse is describing what Jesus is about to do for these disciples, does it mean they need to love one another as he has loved them before he will lay down his life for them?
 - ii. Is it conditional that obedience results in becoming Jesus' friends?
 3. Let's think about another verse to help us. It says in (Jn. 19:12) From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend."
 - a. Do they mean to say that if Pilate releases Jesus, then it will result in losing Caesar as friend?
 - b. I don't think that's what they mean. But rather, if Pilate releases Jesus, then he will prove that he is not Caesar's friend.
 - c. It's like, if your A1C is high, then you have been eating too many sweets.
 4. So, my conclusion is that it goes something like this: If you do what I command you, you are my friends...or you prove that you are my friends.
 - a. This follows what I have already quoted Jesus saying in (Jn. 13:35) ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- iii. The second way Jesus loves his disciples is by "no longer do I call you servants; but I have called you friends." Calling them friends is greater love than being called a servant.
 1. Jesus explains that servants do not know what their master is doing. Jesus' disciples are in on the know. He has told them the things they need to know before they happen so that they will believe!
- iv. The third way Jesus loves his friends is connected to no longer calling them servants but friends in this way by making known all that Jesus heard from the Father. Revealing the truth to them is how Jesus loved them.
 1. Notice the link between the previous two: (Jn. 15:15) but I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.
 - a. It is very common that I give my wife information that no one else knows about. If I kept things from her, my actions would say that I consider her less than my wife.
 2. This demonstrates great love for them by revealing all the Father has disclosed for them through Jesus.
- v. The fourth way Jesus loved his disciples is by choosing them, not the other way around.
 1. Normally, disciples chose their rabbi...teacher. It would be similar if I were seeking a specific field of study, for example, OT. I would seek the OT scholar that I would want to study under and seek to be admitted into that school.

2. It's very clear throughout the Gospels, that Jesus sought out these men and called them to follow. Some left their fishing boats and others left the tax booth to follow Jesus.
- vi. The fifth way Jesus loves them is by tying his choosing of them for the specific purpose of bearing fruit so that whatever they ask the Father in Jesus' name, he may give it to them.
 1. I can recall my own personal struggles in life because there seemed to be no purpose. I didn't know it, but I was thinking through the vanity of life long before I read Solomon's account of it in Ecclesiastes. I mean, work all my life just to someday die and someone else claiming all that was mine was very discouraging.
 2. When I became a believer, much of my confusion about life made sense. I knew what I was created for and saved for—namely, to bear fruit for God.
 - a. And get this, the Creator of the world not only saved me but beckons me to ask for the things I need to carry out the purpose of bearing fruit which glorifies the Father.
 - b. God is described as jealous for his glory. I suppose he will answer perfectly that which brings him glory! Let's ask for more.
- c. Now, I want to take what we just looked at and apply it to our church with an emphasis on Sunday School. How do we love one another as Jesus loved us?
 - i. First, what does it look like to love by laying down our lives for one another?
 1. One way is to be honest with each other. (2 Cor. 4:7) ⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.
 - a. Look, we are jars of clay. Jars of clay are fragile. They are easily cracked. When we think we are more than we really are we hide the fact that surpassing power belongs to God but to us.
 - b. All of us struggle with things. All of us usually do not want someone to know about our struggles. But this is part of the reason we are a church. We need each other. It is a gift. This is place or should be the place that you can ask for help. Be prayed for. Checked on. Encouraged. Walk through the struggles together.
 - i. These SS classes are small for the purpose of close fellowship. Be vulnerable. Be trustworthy. Be a good friend. Care.
 - ii. Be intentional about asking the hard questions and please be honest with each other. Stop covering up the crack in the clay jar. We all know they are there.
 - iii. Help each other obey the Lord gladly. We can't do it alone.
 - ii. How do we love each other by not calling each other servants but friends?
 1. We are family here. Some of you...maybe all of you...have family in this church or nearby. You may or may not know how to be a good family due to past experiences. But let's show our families how to love well.
 - a. As we grow, we may have people in our church that do not have family. Really, you are our family. Day in and day out, our family is 2 hours away. We need you. We want to be a part of your lives. Please let us in.
 2. How do we change how we think of each other? It's common for someone to give me the title of Bro. Jason but that title is rarely used of each other. I'm not saying you have to stop calling me that or that you must refer to each other as brother so and so or sister so and so. But we need to think of each other that way.
 - a. Loyalty is a mark of a loving family. Being there...being here is a mark of a loving family. Coming early or staying late. Having meals together. Sitting around a fire chatting. These are things a loving family does.

- iii. The third way is to tell each other the truth of God's word.
 - 1. We need the truth. If someone is walking in sin, we need to help not overlooked. I'm not talking about being nitpicky. We have a statement of faith so if people are talking craziness that is out of bounds, then we need to correct them and help them know and believe the truth.
 - 2. We have a covenant that sort of outlines how we are to live life together. One obvious thing is those missing people not numbers. Where are they? There are legitimate reasons for missing but we need to find out why.
 - 3. And when we engage one another with the truth it must be delivered with love. To be quarrelsome will mar the beauty of the truth. How we say things matters. But we need to hear the truth. These bible studies and sermons are not just for you. They are to be given away to others.
- iv. How can we love in this matter of choosing?
 - 1. Don't take this the wrong way but God didn't choose you because you were special. In fact, Paul says in (1 Cor. 1:26-29) ²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.
 - 2. Jesus chose his disciples because they need him. We are fellow weak and sometimes foolish strugglers who need each other. There will be times when some of us will be so weak that we begin to pull back. Be aware of their disposition.
 - a. I don't mean that we have it all figured out like Jesus. You are not God's gift to the world. He is. But your presence and your care and your listening ear can help a struggler make progress.
 - b. Really all of these are tied together. We need truth but sometimes we need to look around and notice who is alone. We find it easy to fit in our groups and that's a good thing but look around and see if you are needed somewhere else.
- v. Let's love each other by helping one another to bear fruit of the Lord.
 - 1. (1 Thess. 5:14-18) ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

V. Response

- a. Be vulnerable. Be willing to be hurt. We will have eternal life without broken hearts. Let's spend our days loving one another even if it breaks our hearts now. It will all be over soon. It's worth pouring our love into other leaky pots. Jesus did and he calls us to do as he did.