



Going Beyond the Sermon

Sunday, May 9, 2021 – Dr. John Stephens

“The Way to Love”

John 15:9-17

Bible S.W.A.P.

S-Scripture

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

W-What Does it Say and What Can I Obey?

For this sermon series, the Going Beyond the Sermon notes will look to each Scripture passage for direction in discipleship. We will make connections with the stages of discipleship being experienced by the characters in the stories and where we are in the discipleship journey. For the “What Can I Obey?” portion of study, we will be challenged to take a next step of faith, with the goal of using the passage and notes as a tool for processing and learning to direct ourselves to grow in closeness to Christ.

This week we return to Jesus’ teaching about the vine and the branches. Jerry Webber writes, “Love is our home. Love is our most fundamental base, the place where we are most fully human and most fully ourselves. Jesus begins this passage with “*abide in my love.*” We discussed “*abide*” quite a bit last week, based on the Greek word *meno*. It means to remain, to continue, or to dwell. This week, I’m drawn to Peterson’s translation of this word in The Message: *Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done – kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.* (John 15:9-10)

“This is a monumental word: “*Make yourselves at home in my love.*” In other words, make my love the place of your deepest belonging . . . make my love your home base . . . allow yourself to rest and be renewed in my love . . . dwell in love.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends, (John 15:12-13, NIV)

In this passage, Jesus gives a clear word about what it means to abide or to make a home in him: It means to love as he loves.”

A-Apply

In the “Abide in Me” stage of discipleship, we so fully absorb and rest in God’s love, that we are able to love as Jesus loves. Read the following ways to love suggested by Webber, with real people in mind. Examine your heart for any hesitancy to take these steps of faith.

To love people as Jesus loves is to wash their feet . . .

to serve others in humility . . .

to help the other person rise up to their God-created identity . . .

to companion with other persons as they grow into truth and love . . .

to place the interests of another person or group before your own . . .

to lay down your life for the sake of another person, that is, to lay down your own preferences and ideas of what ought to happen, for the sake of another person’s growth and wholeness.

to lay down one’s life in love can mean accepting hardships, difficulties, dangers, and even death in order for the other person to become fully alive and to grow in love.

to love others is to grow in communion with others . . . to transmit *to* them the life and love of Jesus . . . and to receive *from* them the life and love of Christ.”

Living in the way of Jesus demands self-sacrifice and surrender. As you “fill in the blanks” in the statements above with the names and situations of real people and circumstances, you will remember situations in which you were unable to fully love. Perhaps you felt abandoned by God, hurt by the people you were commanded to love, or just numb to their needs. The spiritual journey is filled with twists and turns and from time to time we hit “the wall.” This is normal. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:13) “Jesus is not on the other side of the wall, arms crossed, impatiently waiting for us to overcome it by ourselves before giving another invitation. He is at the wall with us, invited us to overcome with Him.” (*The Four Stages of a Disciple’s Journey* by Natalie LaValley, p. 22).

P-Pray*

Picture yourself as Jesus. The evening meal is finished. You and your disciples are seated around low tables, talking in hushed tones to each other. You know exactly what you want to do to give the disciples a picture of what true servanthood means. . . Quietly, you stand up and walk over to the side of the room. You take off your outer garment and put on an apron . . . You pour water from a pitcher into the basin. It reminds you of the woman at the well and the Living Water that you are.”

Are you secure enough in yourself to serve others?

*Each passage in this sermon series invites us to imagine the scene. We will use guided imagery from “Christheart” by Jeanne Miley, as prayer prompts. This week, the prompt is from *Reversing Roles, Washing Feet, Day 2*, p. 181.

To learn more about the Stages of Discipleship, go to

www.chapelwood.org/mynextstep.

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Source material is quoted throughout. The sermons are streamed online, and worship is in person at 9:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary of our Greenbay campus. Go to

www.chapelwood.org for details.

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