

“THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Galatians 5:13-14; I John 3:16-18

In Acts 14 after Paul and Barnabas had gone out on the first missionary journey, they came back to the church that sent them.

Acts 14:26-27 ... they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. 27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

Through Love Serve One Another.

Galatians 5:13-14 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but *through love serve one another*. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You have been set free by the Spirit from the law of sin and death. Use your freedom to love God by loving and serving each other.

Meditation on I John 3:17-18:

All that we have comes from God, and it is not just meant for us alone. We are blessed to be a blessing.

Think of all the blessing that we have received from God.

Life, health, strength.

Food, drink, shelter, clothes, homes, cars.

Work, employment, provision, retirement funds.

Schools, medical services, stores, restaurants, churches.

All of our myriad comforts and conveniences for our enjoyment.

All of our blessings, benefits, freedoms, privileges we have in this country, and community.

Above all, all our great and many spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus.

For our deliverance from sin and death, for our forgiveness, for our reconciliation to the Father through the atonement in blood by Jesus. For the sanctifying power of the Holy

Spirit, for the gifts of grace in the Word of God and the fellowship of believers in the church of Jesus Christ.

What do we owe God for all of this?

First, our worship.

Second, our deep and sincere gratitude.

Third, to show our gratitude with our actions, giving ourselves to sharing and helping others.

I John 3:16-18 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 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.

Should we do this once a year?

Should we express our love and gratitude to our spouse once a year on our anniversary?
Should we express our love and gratitude to God in service to others once a year at Serve?

Command, lay down life for brother, vs. 16.

When we hear those words we think of the crucifixion, that we should die for someone else. We should do what Jesus did.

But John's application goes in a different direction. Help someone in need.

We should love the way God loved us and be merciful the way God was merciful toward us.

We are to prove we are chips off the old block. Prove the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Show there is a family resemblance between us and our Heavenly Father. Prove you are adopted and now have His nature in you. If we don't love then we aren't sons. Love is the way people born of God act.

Application, specific application, vs. 17-18.

17 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.

This is remarkable. Christlike love is within everyone's reach. We all can do this. We are not being called to be literal martyrs. It's not a rich young ruler-kind of generosity, give everything to the poor. It's not even a Zacchaeus-like generosity, four times everything.

It is a "whenever you see a brother in need and you have the means to help" kind of generosity.

We all have opportunities to lay down a bit of our life for another. Spouses, parents, siblings, church members, neighbors, co-workers.

Put them first.

Seek their good.

Forgive them.

Listen to them.

Include them.

Pray for them.

Be generous, in some tangible way.

To make a sacrifice. To lay aside our needs or wants for the sake of another.

Notice the way John uses the word brother or sister in verse 17. It's singular. It would be easier if he just said brothers, you know, in a nice general sense, love the brothers. But He doesn't make it generic and just sort of out there, he says your brother. It is specific, particular,

Love for one another is to be one of the chief characteristics of the church. Are we a generous church? As a church our deacons help us be generous through our Benevolence Fund. That pleases me very much. I want to be a part of a Christlike church.

We are generous to our mission partners, who go out into the world to serve others. But that is not all we are to do. Notice again, when John says brother, he is talking about the person next to us or next door to us, to the person that is known to us. It is personal, intimate, real, tangible.

We don't fulfil this command just in some vicarious sort of way through some other channels.

We fulfil this call when we take genuine interest in each other and take responsibility for each other, when we share with someone close at hand.

Is there a person the Holy Spirit brings to your mind that has a need, and you actually have been given the means by God to meet that need? Is there a person in need, and you have to push through your own selfish desires, to help? Is your heart open or closed?

Love is proven by what we do, not what we say. Anyone can say “I love you” but love shows itself in action. Love takes risks. Love gives and expects nothing in return. Love serves.

Expect God to give you an opportunity this week to put your love into action for the sake of Jesus. We can all live up to the example of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. You can be Jesus to someone else.

I Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

I Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

I Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another.

Prayer: Our Holy Father in Heaven, we beg you this morning to bless our seeking of you and bless our being a blessing to those you put in our path, right around us. Give us eyes to see them and hearts of compassion to respond. Above all, dear Father, grant that our church and our lives will increasingly bring glory to your dear Son, our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, in whose precious name we pray. Amen.