

As I Have Loved You

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of loving others as Christ loves us, highlighting the need for patience, kindness, and sacrifice in our relationships.

Scripture: John 13:34

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "Christian Community"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the transformative nature of Christ's commandment to love one another as He has loved us, distinguishing it from the old commandment of loving one's neighbor. This new commandment calls for a deeper, sacrificial love that goes beyond mere kindness or tolerance, urging Christians to embody patience, humility, and selflessness in their interactions. Miller illustrates that true love is not easily provoked and requires a commitment to work harmoniously with others, reflecting Christ's example of unwavering kindness and respect. He challenges believers to practice this love in all aspects of life, including family, friendships, and community, highlighting that genuine love often demands personal sacrifice. Ultimately, Miller calls for a love that mirrors Christ's own, one that is willing to endure and uplift others regardless of their past or shortcomings.

Transcript

Jesus called his commandment of love--a new commandment. Why new? There was an old commandment which ran, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Some people suppose that this is the same as the commandment Jesus gave to his disciples. But there are two differences. The old commandment refers to your neighbor, that is, to everybody; the new refers to your brother, that is, your fellow-Christian. The other difference is in the measure of the love: "As yourself"; "as I have loved you." The world never knew what love meant--until Jesus came and lived among men. "As yourself," leaves self and others side by side; "as I have loved you," carries us away beyond that, for Jesus made a sacrifice of himself in loving his disciples.

This lesson touches our lives at very practical points. It is not enough for a Christian to be a glib, fluent, golden-mouthed talker. "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels--but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." It is not enough for a Christian to be a great teacher, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge--if he has not love, he is nothing. If a man is a great benefactor and if he even becomes a martyr, giving his body to be burned, and has not love, all comes to nothing.

"Love is patient." That is, it bears patiently with others' faults, their unkindnesses to us, their ill treatment and ingratitude. "Love is kind." That is, it continues to be kind in spite of the unkindness it may receive. The trouble with too many of us--is that our kindness is spasmodic, is shown only when we feel like it, and is checked continually by things that happen. But nothing ever stopped the flow of Christ's kindness--and nothing ever should check the flow of a Christian's kindness.

Take another line from Paul's picture. "Love is not rude." That is, it never forgets itself, is never rude, is not proud. Haughtiness is rude. All uncharitableness is rude. Nothing is more remarkable in the story of Christ's life--than his unfailing respect for people. He had respect for everyone that came before him, even the poorest, the lowest, the worst. The reason was, that He loved everyone. If we had our Master's lofty regard for, and his deep interest in the lives of men--we would never act in a rude way toward even the unworthiest.

A poet said he would never have for his friend, that man who would needlessly set his foot upon a worm. If it befits us to treat so considerately, a worm--how should we treat even the poorest, the lowliest, who wears the divine image, and is a child of God?

A newspaper recently gave an account of a new society. A good woman boarding in a New England town one summer, learned that a charitable and kindly feeling was almost universal among the people of the town. She found that they all belonged to a Take Heed Society, and had all pledged themselves to three things--to speak no unkind words, to think no unkind thoughts, and to do no unkind deeds. This society never met in a body, it had no officers, paid no dues, assessed no fines. There was a fine mentioned in the pledge--but this was to be imposed by the offending person upon himself--if he ever violated the rules of the organization. He was to fix his own fine, making it as large as he was able to pay, and the fine was to be paid, not to some treasurer--but to the first poor and needy person he met.

It might be worth while to start such a society in some families, in some schools, in circles of friends, and even in some churches. It might help much in getting the law of love wrought into every-day life.

"Love is not easily provoked." That is, it does not become vexed or irritated at what another may do or say. Yet many people seem to overlook this line of the picture. Nothing is more common than ill-temper. Some people get provoked even at things. One tells of seeing a boy the other day, in a great rage at his bicycle, from which he had fallen, and beating the bike unmercifully. A man awkwardly stumbled over a chair, and flew into a violent passion, kicking the chair all about the room.

No other infirmity is so often confessed, as bad temper. Many people will tell you that they find no other fault in themselves so hard to overcome. Nor do they seem ashamed to make the confession, and apparently do not consider the fault a serious one. Sometimes it is spoken of apologetically, as an infirmity of nature, a hereditary failing, a matter of temperament, certainly not a fault to be taken seriously, nor anything more than a matter of regret. Ill-temper has been called the vice of the virtuous. Men and women whose characters are noble, whose lives are beautiful in every other way, have this one fault--they are sensitive, touchy, easily ruffled, easily hurt!

But we make a grave mistake, when we let ourselves think that bad temper is a mere trifling weakness. It is a most disfiguring blemish! Jesus set for us the perfect model of living--and he was never provoked. We cannot find a single mention of his becoming even ruffled in temper. He never lost his calmness, his repose of mind, his peace of heart. In all his life of persecution, wrong, mocking, and injustice--he never once was provoked. He would have us live the same life. He promises to us his peace. When he bids us

love one another as he has loved us, this certainly is part of what he means.

Loving one another as Christ loves us--makes it easier for others to live and work with us. A minister tells of some people in his church who are excellent workers, full of zeal and energy, always doing things, ever active--but he says they have always to work alone--and never with others. There are horses of this kind; they will not pull in a team, but have to be driven singly. It seems there are people who have the same infirmity. They want to do good--but they must do it by themselves. They will not work with another person.

There is a kind of carriage with only two wheels and a seat for one. It is suggestively called a sulky, because the rider rides alone. But the love of Christ teaches us a better way. We need to learn to think of others, those with whom we are united in Christian life and work. It is so in all associated life.

It is so in marriage. When two lives are brought together in close relations, after having lived hitherto separately, it is evident that both cannot have their own way in everything. There is not room for any two people to have their own way in the marriage relation. They are now one, occupying only the place of one, and they must live as one. There must either be the entire displacement of one by the other, the losing of the individuality of one in that of the other, the giving up of one to the other--or else there must be the blending of the two lives in one life. The latter is the true marriage. Both die, the one to the other. Love unites them, and they are no longer twain--but now one-- two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.

The same principle should prevail in Christian life and work. Headstrong individualism should be softened and modified by love.

Jesus sent forth his disciples two by two. Two working together, are better than two working separately. One is strong in one point and weak in another; the second is strong where the first is weak, and thus the two supplement and compliment each other. Paul speaks of certain Christians as yoke-fellows. Yoke-fellows draw together patiently and steadily, two necks under the same yoke, two hearts pouring their love and fellowship into the one service. None of us should insist upon always having our own way. In community of counsel, there is wisdom. Jesus says that where two agree in prayer, there is more power in the pleading, and the prayer will be surer of answer.

We know the importance in Christian life--of being pleasant to live with and work with. It never should be said of us that other people cannot work with us. The secret of being agreeable yoke-fellows, is love. This means self-losing, self-forgetfulness. The Christian who is always wanting to have positions of prominence, to be chairman or president or secretary, first in something, has not caught the spirit of the love of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto--but to minister. Love never demands the first place--it works just as enthusiastically and faithfully at the foot of a committee, as at the head of it. It works humbly, seeking counsel of the other members, and not asserting its opinion, as the only wise one. It seeks in honor to prefer the other, rather than self. It is content to be overlooked, set aside--if only Christ is exalted. It is patient with the faults of fellow-workers. It strives in all ways, to have the Master as the real leader in all work.

"Love one another--as I have loved you," is the command of Christ. If we love thus--we will sacrifice anything, everything, that the Master's name may never suffer dishonor. This lesson calls us to a love like Christ's, in the building up his kingdom. He loved and gave himself; we must love and give ourselves. We can be saved only--by Christ's sacrificial love. We can serve Christ and our fellow-men, only in sacrificial service.

"As I have loved you," means loving to the uttermost, loving unto the end. We must give our lives for the brethren, as Christ gave his life for us. We must stop at no cost, no effort, no sacrifice, in helping another, in lifting up a life. This love to which Christ calls us--is a love that is not affected by the character or the past life of the person we love. To love as Christ loved--is to love the worst, the least worthy, to love them until they are lifted up, cleansed, and transfigured!

To love as Christ loved--is to get his love into our own lives, to learn to live as he lived--in gentleness, in patience, in humility, in kindness, in forgivingness, in all sweetness of spirit, in all helpfulness and self-denial. It is not easy--but it was not easy for Christ to love as he did. The trouble with too much of what we call 'love' is that it costs nothing, is only a sort of gilded selfishness, is not ready to sacrifice anything, to give up, to suffer, to endure. Oh! profane not the holy name--by calling such life as this 'love'. To love as Christ loves--is to repeat Christ's sacrifice continually, in serving, forgiving, bearing, enduring--that others may be helped, blessed, saved.

That is the love that we are to have in our homes, in our friendships, in our business relations, in our companionships. Yes, it costs--you must give up things and pleasures you greatly want. You must make sacrifices. But have you ever thought that nothing is love at all--which will not sacrifice?

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