



June 2, 2013
Pastor Megan Hackman
Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

Cram Session: Jesus' Parting Words – Love! John 14:15-24

Let's remember today that we're in a cram session! And how do study when you're cramming? By repetition. When the teacher really, really wants you to understand something like photosynthesis, she'll have you learn a goofy song, do an experiment, memorize a graph, and answer it multiple choice. Do you have it yet? This is Jesus' key cram lesson! If you were to guess, what would you say Jesus is trying to get us to learn?

We heard about it last week from Pastor Mark. "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. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35) Jesus showed us how he loved us. He showed us first in a hands-on activity on Mother's Day how he loved us. What did he do? (washed their feet.) And shortly, he will show them the extent of his love by dying on the cross.

Those who love Jesus love like him. Hear the word of the Lord and let it sink into a deeper place today.

[John 14:15-24]

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone

who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Jesus wants us to hear something clearly. If you love me, you will obey my commandments. He's repeated it 3 times with very little variation. Let's take a look at those 3 repetitions:

- Verse 15: "If you love me, you will obey what I command."
- Verse 21: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me."
- Verse 23 "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching," that is, the logos, my word.

Jesus makes a direct connection between loving him and obeying his command.

He's turning to us with this incredible invitation. **If** you love me, Jesus says, you will obey what I command. He doesn't demand our love. If you love me, he says. For many Christians, I could ask, "Do you love Jesus?" And they would say yes. We all know people in and out of the church who would say they know God and perhaps even Jesus who might be willing to pay lip service to loving Jesus. And would answer, yes, I love Jesus. But Jesus says if you love me, loving me is more than saying so. Those who love Jesus love like him.

Let's look at what Jesus is asking of us in more detail. In the first 2 iterations in verses 15 and 21, the one who loves Jesus obeys his commands or commandments—plural. Then in the final repetition, Jesus says, he will obey my logos, my teaching. This is one of John's favorite words! Where have you seen this before? In the beginning was the... So what is Jesus saying here?

Let's take a mini trip back through John. Jesus just summarized for us the whole of the logos, the teaching, in what Pastor Mark taught last week. Love one another. That's the summation of what it is to obey Jesus' commandments, his logos, teaching. That's the summation of what Jesus, the logos incarnate, did for us! He loved us. And now it's the only direct command he gives us, "love one another." So those who love Jesus will obey and act like the very logos incarnate, we will be Jesus in the world, when we love one another. Those who love like Jesus will love like the logos did as we've seen in John.

Is it surprising to you that Jesus had to command us to love one another? I'm the most guilty, probably, at throwing around the phrase "I love you." I really think I mean it! I haven't had a conversation with any one of you that I haven't felt love for you. But then, yesterday at the parade, the last marchers threw the best candy. Gummy lifesavers. All hot and thirsty and in the sun, and I thought, yes! I immediately grabbed 2 bags for me and Larry. Whoops! I'm surrounded by 5 or so Chapel Hill folks. Did they want the gummies, too? Yes! But I thought first only of myself. If you love me, you will obey what I command—you will love one another.

I would love to say it was more out of a reverence for Christ than because my shirt said "Pastor Megan" that I handed over 1 bag of the gummies. Love is more than a feeling, and the action of love can be hard.

It's easier to pay a lip service kind of love to a cranky relative, your neighbor with the noisy dog, or the opposite political party. Jesus knows it will be easier to say we love him than to love like him, to keep his loges. So for every time he calls us to love like him, he promises us a very powerful help. There's a close relationship between loving Jesus and experiencing the Holy Spirit's presence. Listen to these repetitions:

- Verse 16-20: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."
- Then the 2nd part of verse 21: "He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."
- Finally, Verse 23: "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

There is an incredibly close relationship between knowing that God is with you and obeying his command. Jesus is not saying "I will love you and make my home with you if you obey me." Jesus has already spent much of his cram session displaying his love for his disciples. Even before they can act on what they're learning here, Jesus will die on the cross for them. Jesus displayed love by washing the feet of Judas and by feeding him bread dipped in wine the night he betrayed Jesus. His love for us is not dependent upon how well we can obey his command. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) You cannot earn his love by your obedience.

And you know what? We can't even respond properly by obeying his command fully! Loving one another will be hard! So he offers his very Spirit—the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you. That's the message of Pentecost. He gave you his Spirit because you would also be unable to love one another the way that he did without his Spirit alive in your heart. So for every time he says, "If you love me, you will obey my commands." He reminds you that he is giving you the very power to do so.

Out of free love for Jesus, we then receive the command to love one another. It's out of that deep pool as Pastor Mark talked about last week, the deep pool of his love for us that we are given the power to love one another. We get to participate in the deep love that God has for us in our obedience to this command. We are promised that God will be in us! That he will make our home with us! Tremendous promises! All for those who love him.

There are 6 families who have lost loved ones this month in our church. If you are without words to comfort them, look to Jesus within you for the words to comfort. Can you not find it in yourself to forgive an alcoholic child for one more relapse? Jesus dwells in you. If you love Jesus, by his power, obey his command. If you love him, love like him.

Twice Jesus reiterates that the one who loves him obeys his commandments and has his Spirit enabling her to do so. Then Judas (not Iscariot—don't you just love that? John wrote this 40 years or more after Jesus said these words and poor Judas is still trying to clear his name.) Judas (not Iscariot) interrupts Jesus with what, to me, was a very difficult question to understand.

- Verse 22: "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus is clearly on a teaching streak. Why did Judas interrupt him? He seems to go off track, too. He's not asking a question like—how do you want me to love? Or exactly who do you mean by "one another"? He asks about Jesus showing himself—manifesting himself. "But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" What's the connection?

Let's understand this as Judas was asking it. Jesus has just said that he will show himself to the one who loves him. And Judas is frustrated, because he wants the whole world to see Jesus! This is because Judas and the rest of the disciples were expecting the Messiah, the promised one from God, to come as a conqueror. Judas is asking, "How can it be that the Father is going to come and make his home here without every person knowing it? We are expecting fanfare and a great conquering! How can God come and make his home without the whole world knowing?"

I can't ignore, though, how I hear our world today asking this question. It sounds like, "Why do you think God has exclusively shown himself to you in Jesus and not to the whole world as Buddha or Allah?" Have you heard this question or some iteration of it before?

His answer is, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." To me, that seemed like a typical Jesus answer—one that left me with more questions. But Jesus is always addressing the deeper issue. And the deeper issue for Judas was, "When will Jesus be in visible power?" And our culture's deeper question is, "How is the world going to know the way to God?" Jesus' answer addresses both.

Jesus' answer for how the world will know God and how Jesus will be visible is, in effect, "You will show them because I will be visible through you. Hear Jesus' answer again: "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him."

Judas had the wrong idea about what Jesus being visible in the world would look like. So his answer sets Judas straight. The Holy Spirit doesn't live with tremendous fanfare on a visible throne for all to see, but Jesus is visible in the world because he dwells within his people. God has promised that anyone, anyone, who loves Jesus, who seeks him, will find him. We are promised that throughout the Scriptures. Don't get hung up on trying to establish whom God has written in the book of life. Let's be clear that Jesus wants the whole world to know the way to God.

That's the answer to our question, too. How will the world have a chance to know God? He is certainly revealing himself divinely like in dreams. I heard from friends who work with Iranian and Afghan refugees that 6 believers were baptized last month! Many of these refugees first encounter Jesus in dreams. But God's normative way for showing himself to the world is that we are to make him known. And how will we do that? By following Jesus' one command: love one another. That's the summation of the commandment. If you love Jesus, obey his command, his logos, by loving one another. Just as the logos came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ, so the logos continues in the world when we obey him by his power.

It's a sure promise. Look back again at verse 18 when he says, *"I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me... you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."* Boiled down, his answer is, "I will be visible in the whole world because you will show me to the world!" **You** will be my witnesses. "So let your light shine before men that they might see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

The world no longer sees the embodied person of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for your sin. He was raised on the third day and lives to intercede for you in heaven. But he is still visibly present in the world because he has sent the Holy Spirit to you. And just as he sent the Holy Spirit, so he is sending you into the world that does not know him. So he **is** showing himself to the world! Through **you!** And **he** is the way, the **only** way, so we'd best get on with it! Witness who he is.

Verse 24 admits that not all will follow Jesus. *"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."* It comes on the highest authority: that of God alone, that there will be those who will reject the message of Jesus. There will be those who will not love him. Though he loved the whole world, the world has rejected him. But He is visibly present in the world, and he wants the world to know him. He is doing that work through you.

Do you sense the gravity of the witness of how we love one another? God has given us the greatest gift—being with him. And it's not just a promise for eternity. His presence is now! And He is what we need to love our neighbor, our aging parent, our LifeGroup, the church next door, our spouse! God shows himself to the world in the way he enables you to love his people. He's showing the world how he loves by how you love.

So, do you love Jesus? Do you love like Jesus? When it comes to loving like Jesus, how are you doing? Do your neighbors see Jesus? Are you willing to do the dirty foot-washing kind of work in Jesus' name? Our chief call is to love like Jesus. Our faith isn't all about getting to heaven. It's about being his witness in the world. Those who love Jesus will love like him.

Jesus died for the entire world, but they don't see him or know him. But YOU know him! Show him to the world in the way that we love one another. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit would indwell us that we might be up for such a task.

Sermon Questions

- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.

- **DIG DEEPER**

1. What tangible evidences might clue you in that someone loves Jesus? Can you see this in each others' lives? Take a few minutes to encourage one another in how you see others in your LifeGroup loving Jesus well.
2. Jesus uses the phrase "if..." more than 10 days during the upper room discourse, aka "Cram Session." For instance, in John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Why do you think he speaks this way? What power does it lend to the words that follow? (See John 13:35; 14:2-3, 7, 14, 15, 23; 15:6, 7, 10, 18.)
3. What distinction is Jesus making between the people who are listening to Jesus and the world? Does anything make you uncomfortable about Jesus making this distinction?