

CHRIST'S RULE OF LOVE

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Children's Message: *It No Fun To Keep Our Love To Ourselves!*

Object: a game board for a game that requires two or more players

Scripture: John 15:9-17

Hymns: Pro: *God Will Make A Way* **Red:** *In Moments Like These*

Good morning, boys and girls. Have you ever played (name of game)? It's really fun. Do you usually play it with your friends, or with your brothers or sisters? Have you ever tried playing this game all by yourself? That wouldn't be any fun. It doesn't work if only one person tries to play. A game like this was made to be shared and the more people who play it together, the more fun it is.

Our Bible story today is about something else that's supposed to be shared, and that's love. The greatest commandment Jesus ever gave us was to love one another. Love was made to be shared. If we just keep all our love inside of us, and we never share that love with anyone else, then our love is useless. And, it's no fun to keep our love to ourselves.

But, how do we share our love with others? We can tell people that we love them. We can do nice things for people, like share our toys, hold their hand when they're scared, or visit people who are sick or lonely. What are some other ways that we can share our love with others? Those are all wonderful ideas. This week, let's all look for ways to share our love with those around us. Amen.

DEAR LORD: Help us share our love with everyone around us. Amen.

AND, MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL HUMAN UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.

The story is told of a fellow by the name of Ed who was in trouble. You see, he forgot his wedding anniversary and his wife was really angry. She told him, *"Tomorrow morning I expect to find a gift in the driveway that goes from 0 to 200 in less than 6 seconds AND IT BETTER BE THERE!!"* The next morning Ed got up early and left for work. When his wife woke up, she looked out the window and sure enough there was a small gift-wrapped box in the middle of the driveway. Confused, she put on her robe, ran out to the driveway, and brought the box back into the house. She opened it and found a brand new bathroom scale which did, as she requested, *"Zero to 200 in less than 6 seconds."* Her husband Ed has been missing since giving that gift to his wife Friday. Please pray for him!

I heard about another husband named Joe who made a similar error. When their lawn mower broke and wouldn't run, Joe's wife kept hinting to him that he should get it fixed. But, somehow Joe always had something else to take care of 1st - the truck, the car, playing golf - always something more important. Finally, his wife thought of a clever way to make her point. When Joe arrived home 1 day, he found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away the grass with a tiny pair of sewing scissors. He watched silently for a short time and then went into the house. In a few minutes, he came out again and handed his wife a toothbrush and said, *"When you finish cutting the grass, you might as well sweep the driveway also."* *The bad news is, Joe wife ran after him with the scissors. The good news is, the doctors say Joe will walk again, though he will always have a limp.* I guess you have to laugh to keep from crying. But, painfully true, this is the way life is. Well, so much for how we sometimes treat the people we *"supposedly love."* But, on a very serious note, genuine love is really hard to find these days. The reason being, may be really don't know what real love looks like.

I believe our lessons this morning give us a very clear picture of what genuine love does look like. Please read again with me the 9th verse from our Gospel lesson this morning: *"⁹Jesus said, 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.'"* Let's begin here: **We love because God 1st loved us.** And, please read verse 12 with me also: *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* **That is the message for the day- God loved us first, and we ought to love one another as God 1st loved us.** You see, in today's Gospel, Jesus goes beyond the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule says what? That's right – *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."* Or in terms of love, *"Love your neighbor as you love yourself."* But, Jesus is saying to us today, his love trumps the Golden Rule. We are not simply to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are to love our neighbor as Jesus loves us. That's a different, much more difficult standard. You see, our own human love is always conditional, transient, and selective. Today we may love someone because he or she is simply lovable or perhaps because they act lovable toward us. But, then we withdraw our love when we feel wronged or cheated. And, suddenly, love is replaced by a need for vengeance. Just as damaging, often we only love those people who look like

us, act like us, and speak like us – those who share our same background, our same color of skin, our same status and values, those who are talented and gifted, and those who dress appropriately. But, you see, Jesus' love is for ALL PEOPLE! And, his love is SACRIFICIAL!

As Valentine's Day was approaching, young lady, a writer for a magazine, was asked by her editor to write a poem for the magazine. *"But, before you do,"* he said, *"tell me what you think love is."* She got starry eyed. *"It's looking upon a lily pond,"* she said, *"with the one closest to your heart, by the light of the moon, while the lilies are in full bloom."* *"Stop!"* her editor said. *"Let me tell you what love is. It's getting out of a warm bed on a cold winter's night and filling hot water bottles for sick children."* That sounds like the voice of experience. As poetic and beautiful as the writer's response was, her editor's understanding of love was much more on point. Love is sacrificial. When we are healthy emotionally, we will not only love our children as we love ourselves. We will love them far more than we love ourselves. The Golden Rule is insufficient for the relationship between parent and a child. We love our children as Jesus loves them. Our love may never measure up to *agape* love, God's love, because we are mere mortals, but our love, indeed, needs to go as far as it can go – that is to love others more than we love ourselves. And, you see, this is where we truly discover the real test of Christian love: *can we love all God's children with a love that approximates the love we have for our own children – loving others more than we love ourselves?* That is what Christ is asking us to do. Love others as he loves others. Wow! That's hard.

One morning in 2012, a Winnipeg, Manitoba, a city transit bus driver named Kris Doubledee, 38, made an unscheduled stop on a busy street corner. The passengers all watched him as he got off the bus and approached a man on the sidewalk who was barefoot. Doubledee asked the man if he had any shoes; the man said no. So the bus driver removed his own shoes and handed them to the man. *"Here,"* he said. *"You need these more than I do."* Then Doubledee returned to his seat - wearing no shoes - and continued on his route. A passenger asked him why he had done that. Doubledee explained that he had seen the man standing there before and just couldn't bear the thought that he didn't have any shoes. Gee, we say, that's the sort of thing Jesus would do. Yes, and that is the sort of thing a follower of Jesus might do. After 2000 years of Christian history, that shouldn't be such a radical thought, *but it is!!!* We claim to follow Jesus, but most of us rarely seek to live as Jesus commanded us to live - that is to love as Jesus loves.

Some of you understand what Jesus means when he tells us to love as he loves – I think his exact words in Scripture go something like this: *"Even as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me."* Sound familiar? And, even if some of you don't get it, I hope before this sermon ends this morning, you will have at least a little bit of understanding of what it means to love as Jesus' loved. We love those closest to us. But, the question is, can we enlarge that circle of love? That is what Christ is asking us to do.

Let me tell you about a dog that made the newspapers a while back. Some of you have dogs and know how special they can be. Well, there was nothing special about this dog. He had no pedigree. He was just a mutt. But, for some unknown reason 1 day this dog stopped eating the food scraps that his master set out for him. Instead, he would take the bones, and anything else he could hold in his mouth, and disappear into the woods. One day, being curious, the dog's owner decided to follow his dog to see what he was doing. What he discovered was that his dog had been carrying food to another dog that had been trapped in some barbed wire. Nobody had trained him to do this. Why he should take this action, nobody knows, but he was taking his own food to a comrade in distress; denying himself in order to give another dog enough to eat. I don't know about you, but in my book, that dog is superior to many Christians. Maybe at some time or another that dog had slipped into BLC/SMLC/STLC and heard a few of Pr. Guss' sermons. Nonetheless, even though this dog was just a mutt, he was living as Christ commands us to live. Now, if a dog can do that for a fellow-dog, can you and I not do better to be like Jesus? This is truly a serious question!

Well, getting back to our Gospel lesson, actually **Jesus gives us 2 commands today. The 1st is to remain in his love. Where do we find the power to love as Jesus loved? We find it by remaining in his love.** Read verses 9 & 10 again with me please: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 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." And, then in verse 12, Jesus gives us his **2nd command** – let's read verse 12 together: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." **That is to say we are to "love each other as he has loved us."** This command is linked to the 1st command - to remain in God's love. When we remain in his love, God's love will give us the power to love others, to love even the seemingly most unlovable people on earth, and trust me when I tell you – there are a whole lot of unlovable people out there who need our love.

Jesus is saying to you and me today, "It is possible to love those people you sometimes do not like.." It's possible because Christ 1st loved you before you even could debate who you will love and who you won't love. Do you hear what I am saying – Christ's love is already in you. So, I am telling you right now, when you have the love of Jesus in your heart for even your worst enemy, you will be able to love others who are outside of your circle of intimate relationships. You could say to me, *"Pastor, that's ok, I don't want to love that much."* My response to you, *"Try you might like it."* Let the Spirit of God fill you up, you will have power to do things in your life you never thought possible. A life filled with God's Spirit is a life filled with God – the source of all love. And, this is nothing to mess with. This is what the cross is all about. Go from this place this morning, and not only do unto others as you would have them do unto you, love and do unto others as Christ has loved and done unto you today, now, and forever more. Amen.

