

**THE FORGIVEN LIFE ... THE LOVING LIFE:  
THE CONTINUAL WORK OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH  
The Mission of Christ and the Church  
John 15**

**John 15:4-5**~ <sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

**John 15:12-14,17**~ <sup>12</sup>“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do what I command you ... <sup>17</sup> This I command you, that you love one another.

**John 15:18-19, 26-27**~ <sup>18</sup>“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated you*. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you ... <sup>26</sup>“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup> and you *will* testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

## I. Introduction

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters. What a joy it is to be here at Forgiven Life with you this morning. We are going through a series titled “The Forgiven Life ... The Loving Life” ... subtitle, “The Continual Work of Christ and the Church”.

Last week, we looked at the four values that mark the work of Christ and the Church. And these four values are what marked our Church as well, namely, the A.C.T.S. of Forgiven Life.

1. Authenticity
2. Compassion
3. Team Work
4. Simplicity

Those are the values ... they are how we are to do things. We are to do things with authenticity, compassion, team work, and simplicity. Now that we know how we are to do things, the next question is, “What are we to do? What is the mission of Christ and the Church? What does Jesus want His Church to do? In other words, where are we going?”

A lot of frustration arises when we do NOT know where we are going and what we are doing. Confusion, stress, restlessness are just some of the symptoms of an undefined clear vision. We must have a clear grasp of our vision and our mission.

One author notes that:

Visions are valuable ... Because life is always full of unexpected twists and turns, and unless you have a true sense of where you want to go, you'll find yourself going in circles. Sure, you'll be busy as you keep going in circles, but **motion doesn't equal progress.**<sup>1</sup>

And that is how many of us pastors and people do Church? We run around in circles ... and we run after the latest fads. I remember when Seeker Sensitive church model came out, the churches ran after that model. Then when the Cell Church model was announced, we flocked after that. House Church model, we ran to that ... Discipleship model ... Shepherd model. We are just running around, chasing after one latest model to the next and the one latest fad to the next latest fad. There are a lot of movements. There are a lot of motions. But “motion doesn't equal progress.”

And in doing these many “motions” and “movements”, we lose sight of the mission that Jesus has for His Church. Now there is nothing wrong with these models and movements. Some of them are very good. But these models and movements are not the mission.

## II. The Message of Jesus

Well, thankfully, Jesus does not leave the Church without a clear mission. His mission for the Church is found in John chapter 15. Let's get some context here before we delve into the mission and this wonderful chapter.

It is the night that Jesus is betrayed and dies. It is the night that he will depart from the earth. So Jesus desires with such great earnest to have a last meal with his disciples in the Upper Room ... just Him and His Twelve. In fact, Luke in his gospel, records Jesus' words to his disciple concerning this Last Supper.

**Luke 22:15~<sup>15</sup>** And he [Jesus] said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

The words “earnestly” and “desired” are part of the same word. In other words, Jesus is saying, “I desire with great desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” ... “before I die and depart.” So this is not a night by which Jesus minces words. Jesus is going to get to the point and be as poignant as possible before His time runs out and He must depart from this world.

It was just yesterday that my wife told me that my introduction is too long ... and that I repeat myself too often. “Just get to the point,” she told me. “No long introduction is needed.” Yes, I tend to be too windy with my words. And because I get too windy with my words, my message is lost in the many words. But this is not so with Jesus. He jumps right into his points and says only what is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch, and Sean Lynch, *Spark: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success* (Boston; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), p. 98.

So in John chapter 13, Jesus is in the Upper Room with his disciples. These are the twelve ... well, minus one ... who will continue his mission without him. He starts his teaching with an example ... The Bible says in John 13:4 that Jesus ...

**John 13:4-5**~<sup>4</sup> rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

Jesus, who is their Lord and Master, washes his disciples feet ... a job of a slave. Jesus gives these men, the future leaders of His Church, an example for them to lead the Church. Jesus says so in verses 15 and 16.

**John 13:15-16**~<sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Jesus' first point is this:

1a. First, to be a Leader, we must be a Slave.

I think sometimes we forget about this ... we who are leaders and pastors and deacons and shepherds ... that is, those who aspire to lead. If we wish to be first, we must be last. If we wish to be the greatest, we must be the least. If we wish to lead, we must serve. Now these are apostles that Jesus is talking to ... the pillars of the Church ... the ones who lay the foundation of the Church. And Jesus tells them that as leaders, they must be servants. Sometimes I feel that most of us who are to lead the Church forget this very important qualification. We seek respect from the Church instead of seeking to serve the Church in practical ways.

Anyway, I can talk about this for hours. But let me move forward. If we do not quite grasp what this serving looks like, Jesus summarizes this in verses 34 and 35.

**John 13:34-35**~<sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Emphasis is mine).

1b. Another way of saying it, to be a Disciple, we must Love one another.

To be a leader, we must love. In fact, to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus, we must love one another. This is how the Church and the world know that we are Christians that we are followers of Jesus ... if we love one another.

We are not Christians because we read, study, and know the Bible. We are not Christians because we go to seminary. We are not Christians because we wear a cross around our neck and say spiritual things. We are not Christians because we pray a lot. We are

Christians because we love one another. We are disciples of Jesus because we love one another.

And that is why Jesus says that if we have a problem with each other, we better go fix it. “Don’t bring your offering to me if you don’t love your brother or sister. Fix it first, then come to me.”<sup>2</sup>

Let’s move to Jesus’ second point:

In chapter 14, Jesus is still in the Upper Room with his disciples. He concludes chapter 13 by saying that they will all deny him that very night. But in chapter 14, his main point is found in verse 6.

**John 14:6**~<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

“Life is found in me,” Jesus emphasizes. “If you want life ... abundant life with the Father ... you must come to me.” How do you do that? Well, four times he tells us how in chapter 14.

**John 14:15**~<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

By the way, what commandment was that? Love one another (John 13:34-35).

**John 14:21**~<sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

Jesus will reveal himself to us if we love him and love one another. Look at verse 23.

**John 14:23**~<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

If we love Jesus (and it is seen by us loving one another), Jesus will love us and the Father will love us. Look at verse 24 where Jesus gives the negative.

**John 14:24**~<sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words ...

Jesus’ second point is this ...

2. Second, to be a Disciple, we love Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> **Matthew 5:22**~<sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Jesus' message in John chapters 13 and 14 is about love. Love Jesus and love one another.

### III. The Mission of the Disciples

With those poignant points, Jesus and his disciples get up from the table and leave the Upper Room, heading toward Gethsemane where he will be betrayed.

**John 14:31**~<sup>31</sup> ... [Jesus says,] Rise, let us go from here.

Jesus is walking with his disciples to his death. And as he is walking, he is still talking with his disciples and teaching them in chapter 15. Picture that, he is walking and talking giving them their final instruction before he departs and dies. He wastes no time. He has an important message that he must impart to them before he dies.

There are three things that Jesus wants his disciples to do. These three things are the Mission of the Church, if you will.

#### 1. First, Love Jesus (John 15:1-11).

**John 15:4-5**~<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Jump to verse 10.

**John 15:10**~<sup>10</sup> 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.

We are to "abide" or "remain" in our love for Jesus. The word "abide" appears 10 times in 11 verses. Unless we remain ... clinging to Jesus, we cannot bear fruit ... that is, we cannot love one another. And if we do not love, that is, bear this fruit, we cannot do two things:

- a. One: we cannot glorify the Father.
- b. Two: we cannot be Jesus' Disciples.

Do you see that in verse 8?

**John 15:8**~<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Bearing fruit of love for one another starts with loving Jesus. This is the first and primary mission of the Church. We are to teach people to love Jesus and follow him.

2. Second, Love One Another (John 15:12-17).

The second mission is similar to the first. The second thing that the Church must educate and do is to love one another. Look at verse 12.

**John 15:12~<sup>12</sup>**“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Jump down to verse 17.

**John 15:17~<sup>17</sup>** These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

These “book ends” serve to emphasize that love for one another is the main issue of this section. We are to love one another. Jesus mentions that in chapter 13, chapter 14, and now chapter 15. He will also mention it again in chapter 17 when he prays to the Father.

3. Third, Share this Love to the World (John 15:18-27).

Look at verse 18.

**John 15:18~<sup>18</sup>**“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

But even if the world hates you, Jesus says, you must be a witness to the world. You see that in the last verse? Verse 27?

**John 15:27~<sup>27</sup>** And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Love cannot be contained. Once we love God, His love flows through us so that we are able to love one another. With all this love for God and for one another, it must overflow to sharing this love to the world.

This is the mission of the Church. This is the mission of Forgiven Life. It is summed up in this statement:

**Love God,  
Love One Another,  
and share this Love to the World**

It is that simple.

#### IV. Conclusion

Let me conclude with two final thoughts.

1. First, there is the Great Commandment before there is the Great Commission.<sup>3</sup>

Please notice: Love God ... Love One Another. What is that? That is the Great Commandment.

In Matthew 22, a lawyer came to Jesus with a question:

**Matthew 22:35-40**~<sup>35</sup> And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”<sup>37</sup> And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.<sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

And please notice: Share this Love to the World. What is that? That is the Great Commission.

**Matthew 28:19-20**~<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

There is the Great Commandment before there is the Great Commission. We cannot share this love to the world if we do not first love God and one another. We got nothing to share. Some people are trying to reach the lost when they cannot even reach each other. It does not work that way.

2. Second, Jesus seeks a Loving Church more than a Large Church.

I think the frustration comes when we focus our attention so much on trying to be a large church instead of trying to be a loving church. We cannot determine how large our church will be. That is not in our job description. That is the prerogative of the Lord.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7:

**1 Corinthians 3:6-7**~<sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.<sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Cecil, class notes of this student in 602 Evangelism, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1996, 12.

It is the Lord who determines the size of the Church. It is his prerogative, not ours. Our prerogative is to determine the size of our love. We need to focus and expend our energy on being a loving Church and let God focus on the size of the Church.

V. The Blessing

**Presider:** May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be unto you.

**Congregation:** And also to you.

VI. Forgiven Life Living

It is time to examine our heart to see if there is love in our heart. Read the follow Scripture passage and answer the questions truthfully and thoughtfully.

A. Love God

**Deuteronomy 6:5 ~ 5** You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

**Matthew 22:36-39 ~ 36** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” **37** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

**John 15:10 ~ 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.

1. In John 15, it says that we can abide in God's love by keeping His commandments. What is the best way to learn about His commandments? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How would you rate your relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_

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a. Are you just getting to know Him, is it just a casual relationship as time allows or when you have a need, or are you "all in" in your relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_

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b. Do you talk to God often and share with Him your greatest joys and your greatest worries? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are the barriers you have in loving God with all your heart, soul and mind? \_\_\_\_\_

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**B. Love One Another**

**John 15:12** ~ 12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

**John 13:34-35** ~ 34 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. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1. Why is it important to experience God's love first before we can love one another? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Can we be effective in bringing others to Christ and to our church if we do not love one another? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What are ways that we can show love to one another at Forgiven Life? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Do you make an effort to love church members who may be different from you or whom you have disagreements with? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Do you resolve conflicts with other church members working towards love and unity, or do you continue to hold grudges towards others without any resolution? \_\_\_\_\_  
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C. Share this Love to the World

**John 17:20-23 ~ 20** “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,**21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23** I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

**John 15:19~ 19** If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

**1 John 2:15-17~ 15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life[c—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**Matthew 28:19-20~ 19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching

them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

1. Why is it important for believers to be united when we try to share about Jesus with the world? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How do we love the world even when those of the world may have different values and beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How do we love the world with the desire to share God's love and the good news with them, without being conformed to the world? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How do we practice the Great Commission in our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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