

Main Idea: How do we make Christ known to a world that doesn’t want to hear about Him? Jesus tells us in John 13:34-38. *By this will all men know*, says Jesus. In this important passage Jesus gives His followers two things that will make it clear to this world that we belong to Him.

I. An exhortation (34-35)

- A. Jesus says we are to treat one another as He treated us.
  1. Think about what Jesus did in the upper room.
  2. Think about what Jesus did during their three years together.
  3. Think about what Jesus did on the cross.
- B. Jesus says if we do so, the world will identify us with Him.
  1. How we treat each other is evangelism.
  2. How we treat each other exposes our need for grace.
- C. Jesus says that what He commands, He makes possible (chs 14-15).
  1. Jesus will help us (14:12).
  2. The Spirit will help us (14:16-17).
  3. The Father will help us (14:23).
  4. The Triune God will produce this fruit of love in us (15:1-4; 9-17).

II. An example (36-38)

- A. Jesus revealed some painful truth to Peter.
- B. Jesus revealed He would never give up on Peter.
  1. This is what He’s done with us, too.
  2. This is what we’re to do with one another.

Make It Personal: Ponder three questions...

1. Have I experienced the love of Christ?
2. Am I experiencing the love of Christ?
3. Am I showing the love of Christ to my forever family?

This past month we’ve been seeking to answer the question, how do we make Christ known to a world that doesn’t want to hear about Him? This morning we’ll be listening to something Jesus said in John 13:34-38. *By this will all men know*, said Jesus.

*Scripture Reading: John 13:34-38*

We have a wonderful Savior, and our Savior has given us a wonderful, world-wide mission. The One who died for us and conquered death to save us has told us to make Him known to the world.

But there’s increasing hostility in this world towards our Savior. That means we need not only courage, but wisdom and discernment if we’re going to fulfill our mission.

How will we do it? I’m thankful He gives us models.

E.g.—

Back in 2014 Albert Mohler, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, delivered an address at Brigham Young University. The talk was entitled, “Strengthen the Things that Remain: Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Human Flourishing in a Dangerous Age.” Mohler helpfully models for us how to fulfill our mission in this volatile age. Here’s how he began:

The presence of the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary behind the podium at Brigham Young University requires some explanation. I come as an evangelical Christian, committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the trinitarian beliefs of the historic Christian faith. I come as one who does not share your theology and who has long been involved in urgent discussions about the distinctions between the faith of the Latter Day Saints and the faith of the historic

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\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the John series at WBC 3/2/14.

Christian church. I come as who I am, and your leaders invited me to come knowing who I am. I have come knowing who you are and what you believe and my presence here does not mean that the distance between our beliefs has been reduced. It does mean, however, that we now know something that we did not know before. We need to talk. We can and must take the risk of responsible, respectful, and honest conversation. We owe this to each other, and we owe this to the faiths we represent. And we had better talk with candor and urgency, for the times demand it.

What “times” is Dr. Mohler talking about? Most of his talk had to do with the moral erosion America is experiencing, why it’s happening, and what we should do about it. Again, very helpful, but I’m interested in what our brother did to fulfil our Savior’s mission. Here’s what he said towards the end of his address:

When I was with you last October, I said something that got picked up by media around the world. I said that I believe that we will not go to heaven together, but we might well go to jail together. That was last October. That was four months and a few days ago. Since then, federal courts in your own state have ruled that your legal prohibitions of both same-sex marriage and polygamy are unconstitutional. Since that time, the President of your church has been summoned to appear in a secular court in London. Since that time, just over one hundred days ago, so much has changed.

Civil and criminal penalties have recently been leveled against bakers, photographers, and florists who could not in good conscience participate in a same-sex wedding ceremony. Erotic liberty is in the ascent and religious liberty is in peril.

We may go to jail sooner even than we thought.

This is why our conversation is really important, and why we need to stand together on so many urgent concerns. Most importantly, we are now called to defend religious liberty for each other, so that when they come for you, we are there, and so that when they come for us, you are there. We are learning anew what the affirmation of religious liberty will demand of us in this dangerous age.

But as I come among you, and I am honored by this opportunity to address you, I come as a friend among friends to speak as who I am and of what I believe. As a Christian, my ultimate confidence does not rest in marriage, or the family, or civil society, or human rights, or any human affirmation of human dignity, not matter how robust.

My confidence is in the Lord, the unchanging God of the Bible, who revealed himself in the Bible and who redeems sinners through the atonement accomplished by his Son, Jesus Christ, who was both fully human and fully divine. My confidence is in the Gospel revealed by Christ and preached by the Apostles — the Gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. I believe in the saving acts of Christ in his death, burial, and bodily resurrection from the grave. I believe that the Bible is our sufficient written revelation, inerrant and infallible and unchanging. I believe that God’s promise of salvation will be fulfilled and that all he has promised in Christ will be given. I believe in the truth unchanged and unchanging, because I believe in the God who tells us in the Bible that he never changes.

I can close my eyes at night and I can open them to face each day because I know that my Redeemer lives, and that history is in the hands of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I know that I, along with all who come to him by faith, are safe in Christ. I can trust that he, as the Apostle Paul stated so famously, will be faithful to the end.

I thank the Lord for this brother and how the Lord has given him a platform, and how he is using that platform to make the truth of Jesus Christ known to a needy yet increasingly-hostile world.

That raises the question, how can we do it? In the face of the world's opposition to what we love and value, how can we make Christ known? Yes, we too should be verbal witnesses for Christ *out there*. But there's another way, and it happens *right here*. In fact, it's one of the most powerful ways to open up opportunities *out there*, and it's something we're to do with *each other*.

In John 13:34-38 Jesus Himself gives His followers two things that, if we take them to heart, will enable us to send a powerful message to the world, about who He is, and who we are, and what it needs.

### I. An exhortation (34-35)

Verses 34-35, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

D. A. Carson remarks, "The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice."<sup>2</sup>

These are familiar words, but seeing this familiar command in its context makes all the difference. What just happened in that upper room? Jesus and His men gathered to eat the Passover meal together, but when they got to the room, they had dirty feet. A problem. This wasn't their house. Another problem. None of the disciples did anything about it. Luke's account says they were arguing about which of them was the greatest.

So, Jesus assumed the posture of a slave and washed His own follower's feet, and finished by saying, "Do as I have done for you (15)."

Then He announced that one of those men was going to betray Him. Unthinkable, for sure. Any other ruler would lock away or kill any subject suspected of betrayal. But Jesus? He offers the betrayer the best piece of food on the table, and yet another opportunity to repent. And when he doesn't, Jesus says, "What you are about to do, do quickly (27)," and lets him go free to finalize the plot to hand Him over to His enemies.

"Now is the Son of Man glorified," says Jesus at that very moment. What? This is glory time? Yes. According to Jesus, God's glory is put on display through washing the feet of selfish men and giving the betrayer the best piece of food on the table. In God's eyes, that is glorious.

You say, "But doesn't the Bible teach that God hates selfishness and betrayal?" Yes. Those are expressions of sin, and He hates sin. But He loves sinners, and He has come in human flesh to love selfish, betraying sinners. How? By washing their feet, and giving them the best piece of bread. But ultimately, by giving something else.

*His own life*. "Where I am going you cannot come," He says in verse 33. Where's He going that He must go alone? He's going to carry a cross outside of Jerusalem where He will give His life as a ransom payment for sinners.

This is the context. The Son of God just demonstrated the glory of His grace by washing selfish feet, giving bread and another opportunity to repent to a betrayer, and expressing His commitment to give His very life for sinners on the cross. It's at this time that He said these words...

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<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson, *John*

*A new command I give you.* A new command? It's not new in the sense of brand new, for there are similar commands in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Leviticus 19:18 says, "Love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." And Jesus Himself had earlier said (in Mark 12:28-33) that the Law was summed up by these two commands, love God, and love neighbor.

So the command to love isn't *new*. What's new is the specific object of this love. He says His followers are to love *one another*. Just one another? No, not just. But initially, and particularly, and undeniably. There's something about this command as it relates to one another that the Lord intends to use to influence the world.

But there's another element of newness. Jesus doesn't stop with, "Love one another," but adds a modifier. "*As I have loved you.*"

**A. Jesus says we are to treat one another as He treated us.** This is a high standard, and if we're going to fulfill it, we need to do some serious thinking about what He did. *As I have loved you.* Loved you *when and how*? What does Jesus have in mind? To answer that, let's think about three expressions of His love.

1. *Think about what Jesus did in the upper room.* In that upper room Jesus saw the dirty feet of twelve selfish men. What did He do? He humbled Himself and *washed* those feet. Also in that upper room, He looked into the eyes of a man whose life He had blessed for three years, a man who was presently in the process of betraying Him, and He treated that man just like you would treat your best friend, by *offering him the best food on the table.*

Dear friends, anybody can love people who treat them well. That's not Jesus' command. He says, "*As I have loved you, you who are selfish and you who are betraying me, so you must love one another.*" This is a radical command.

But since Jesus' love didn't start in that upper room, we must go back further. If we're to do what He did, we need to think carefully about what He did with these men. That's what love is. That's what we're called to do. So think back...

2. *Think about what Jesus did during their three years together.* What He did was love in action. He didn't write them off when they doubted, or wavered, or asked stupid questions. He didn't condemn them because of their past. Instead, He spent time with them. He ate with them. He let them get close to Him. He healed their loved ones. He taught them. He mentored them. He trained them and unleashed them to do ministries. At times He confronted them when there was sin. At other times He encouraged them when there was fear.

That's what love looks like, and that's what we're to do with each other. *Be like Jesus, this my song, in the home and in the throng.*

But of course, there's one more place we must go. This is love in the ultimate.

3. *Think about what Jesus did on the cross.* "As I have loved you..." Here we see the apex of His love. On the cross He chose to become a sacrificial lamb, taking the place of hell-bound sinners, taking their sin upon Himself, paying the penalty they deserved to pay.

*He took my sin and my sorrow, He made them His very own.*

*He bore my burden to Calvary, and suffered and died alone.*

And He who did all this says to His followers, "As I have loved you..." We mustn't glamorize this. In reality, we will at times experience from each other what He experienced. Disappointment. Hurt. Abandonment. Betrayal. We'll experience that because at times that's what sinners do to each other, even redeemed sinners.

Then what? Then we'll feel like putting up a wall, or finding a way to hurt them back, or perhaps running from the problem. That's what we feel like doing, but the Lord doesn't want us to do as we feel. Doing that robs Him of glory and us of our maximum joy. He says we must *love* our fellow followers who hurt us, just like He loved us.

Let's be honest. This is not natural. The choice to love one another is a choice to make oneself vulnerable, to risk the possibility of further pain and hurt. So why would we do that? The Bible gives several reasons, but notice the one Jesus gives here.

**B. Jesus says if we do so, the world will identify us with Him.** Verse 35 again, "By this [by choosing to love one another as He loved us] all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

How will the lost world know that we belong to Jesus? By our beautiful church buildings? No. By our programs? No. By the way we dress? No. By our preaching? No, not initially. They will know it by this... *if you love one another.*

Let's talk about a couple of implications, brothers and sisters. According to Jesus...

1. *How we treat each other is evangelism.* It's not the only form of evangelism, but it's often the initial one the world sees.

Tertullian was an early Christian leader who lived about a century later than John the apostle. He says that the pagans of his day marvelled at the love of Christians, particularly at how Christians faced persecution by standing together. "See how they love one another!... how are they ready even to die for one another!"<sup>3</sup>

When we do with each other what Jesus did with us, we're giving our unsaved neighbors a clear presentation of our Savior, and that's evangelism. When we have marriage problems, and choose to forgive each other, and return good for evil, just like He did us, what are people going to think? They'll think, one, you're just like us, for we have marriage problems too, and two, you're like someone I've heard about, who forgave those who wronged Him and overcame evil with good. And I'd like to know more about Him.

*By this will all men know that you are My disciples.*

Friends, how we do life together as a church *is* evangelism. It's certainly not a substitute for speaking the good news, but it actually shows the good news in ways even a hostile world can't miss.

Do we ever hurt each other in this church? Do we ever sin against one another? You know we do, just like we did (and still do) to Jesus. And He says, *by this all men will know.* By what? By precisely how we respond to a brother who is selfish towards us, or even betrays us, by our commitment to do as He did, to do what's right for the glory of God, no matter what's been done to us, for that's what it means *to love one another.*

Love is the choice to do what's right towards another, to do what's in their best interest. You say, "But that's so hard to do!" And you're right. In fact...

2. *How we treat each other exposes our need for grace.* God's unmerited help and favor. That's what we need if we're going to love one another as our Savior has loved us. And that's what we have.

You say, "I don't see any mention of grace in this passage." I do. Oh, not the word, but just look at the next two chapters. Jesus' teaching in the upper room doesn't end in chapter 13. He's just getting started, and if I can summarize the next two chapters with a sentence, it goes like this...

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<sup>3</sup> *Apology* 39.7; taken from Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

**C. Jesus says that what He commands, He makes possible (chs 14-15).** We've just considered His command in 13:34-35, a command so important He repeats three times. *Love one another. Love one another. Love one another, as I have loved you.* That command does what any divine command does to sinners. It exposes our inability. I can't love others like He has loved me. That standard is too high.

So what's the solution? It's grace, for what He commands, *He* makes possible.

And how does He do it? In John 14-15 Jesus informs His followers that divine help is on the way, and it's specifically intended to help them, to help *us*, fulfill this impossible command to love one another as He has loved us.

1. *Jesus will help us (14:12).* Notice John 14:12, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Did you catch that? What's true of the person who has faith in Jesus? Jesus says *he will do what I have been doing.* In fact, *even greater things than these.*

Interesting. What kind of things has Jesus been doing? I'd always thought He was talking here about miraculous works, and He is. But in this context, what's Jesus been doing? The things we might consider impossible, like washing the feet of selfish men who are about to deny us, and treating a betrayer like a dear friend.

*I could never do that!* But He did. And He says He will help us do the same.

Friends, who has the power to do these kinds of things? Jesus does, AND whomsoever He gives that power, which He does to His followers. Notice His very next words in verses 13-14, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

What's He talking about? What kind of things does He want us to ask for? Do you see the connection? *Lord, my brother just hurt me deeply. He betrayed our friendship. I feel like never seeing him again, or making him hurt, but I know You want me to love him as You have loved me. Will You give me the power to do that?*

*YES!* says Jesus. *I will help you do it, and even greater things than I have done.*

Greater? Think about it. Jesus loved the betrayer, Judas. Now think about what Jesus' followers have done. Think of Stephen with his dying words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Think of Barnabas and how he befriended Saul of Tarsus, the man who had formerly thrown Christians in prison but was now claiming to be a Christian. Barnabas took a huge risk and stood by Saul and brought him into the fold of the church. That's loving one another as I have loved you.

I think of Pastor Paul Schneider who shepherded a congregation in Germany in the 1930s and was betrayed by Nazi informants who were church members. His response? He kept loving that church, no matter how much professing believers hurt him. He ended up in a concentration camp where he was treated brutally, finally executed, but made Christ known to the very end.

And the list goes on. Who enabled these individuals to respond like that, and will do the same for us? Jesus said *He* will help us. Which raises the question, *how?*

2. *The Spirit will help us (14:16-17).* Keep reading in John 14 and notice verses 16-17, "And 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."

So the Son helps us, yes. And how? By the ministry of the Holy Spirit whom He promised and sent. They are one, but since they are different persons, they help in different ways. How does the Spirit help us? Here's one way, verse 26, "But the

Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The Spirit helps us by *teaching* us. This is so personal. So when you find yourself thinking, “I don’t know how to love that hard to love sister in Christ!”, the Spirit responds, “*Here. I’ll show you how.*” And He uses His Word to teach us, and strengthen us, and work through us to manifest a Christlike response.

But there’s more. According to Jesus...

3. *The Father will help us (14:23)*. Notice verse 23, “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.’” Stop there. What’s true of a person who loves Jesus? He will *obey my teaching*. And what’s the essence of that teaching? *Love one another as I have loved you*. And what’s true of that person? Notice the rest of verse 23, “...My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

You say, “I can’t love that person! It’s too hard!”

Is it too hard for God the Father who has sovereignly placed that person in your life? It’s not. And know this. God the Father didn’t just put that person in your life. Jesus says that He and the Father will come to you and make their home with you! So we’re not alone in this assignment.

And lest we miss the point, Jesus gives an illustration in chapter 15. About fruit. The point? Again, let’s not miss the connection.

4. *The Triune God will produce this fruit of love in us (15:1-4; 9-17)*. Listen to Jesus in 15:1-4, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

Where does this power for loving one another originate? In ourselves? No. We’re simply branches, and a severed branch dies. But connected to the vine, it bears fruit. In fact, one little branch connected to a vine has the potential of producing anything the vine itself can produce.

Think of that grape vine behind your house. Hanging from that one tiny little branch is the huge cluster of grapes.

And what kind of fruit does Jesus have in mind here? Listen to verses 9-17, “As the Father has *loved* me, so have I *loved* you. Now remain in my *love*. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my *love*, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his *love*. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: *Love each other as I have loved you*. Greater *love* has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: *Love each other.*”

There is it. The fruit our Savior wants to see in us is *love*. Specifically, He wants us to love *each other*, just like He has loved us. And while that’s impossible in our strength, we can do it because the Triune God Himself provides the strength. The Son helps us. The Spirit helps us. The Father helps us. The *Triune God Himself* produces this fruit of love in us!

So there’s the exhortation. We are to love one another as Jesus has loved us, and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit provide the power that makes it possible. But we have a

problem, namely, it's so easy to misunderstand love. We tend to think of love merely as an emotion or feeling, that love means I feel a certain way towards you. And while that's true, true love goes deeper, and broader, and higher, and longer, as demonstrated by Jesus Himself.

## II. An example (36-38)

It's what He does with Peter. Two things. First...

**A. Jesus revealed some painful truth to Peter.** Listen to the exchange between the Lord and Peter in verse 36, "Simon Peter asked him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus replied, 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.'"

It's as if what Jesus said in verses 34-35 went right over Peter's head. Peter doesn't want to talk about loving his brothers. He wants to discuss Jesus' announcement back in verse 33 that He's leaving.

Of course, this is Peter's pattern. He's always asking Jesus questions. And that's not a bad thing either. Questions reveal. They reveal what we're thinking, and lacking, and needing.

Notice that Peter asks another question in verse 37, "Lord, why can't I follow you now?" But his question quickly leads to a bold claim, "I will lay down my life for you." Peter truly loved Christ. He meant what he said. The problem is, he's underestimating the problem of his heart. He wants to love Jesus, but he lacks what it takes.

This of course is why Jesus is on His way to the cross. Peter is a sinner, as we are. As such, he is enslaved to his self-first approach to life, though he knows it's wrong. He's saying the right thing, for he should lay down his life for His Master. But he doesn't have what it takes, not within himself.

And to help him see that, Jesus bursts his bubble in verse 38. "Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!'"

"Good intentions in a secure room after good food," says D. A. Carson, "are far less attractive in a darkened garden with a hostile mob."<sup>4</sup> He's right. How many promises have you and I made to the Lord from a church pew on a Sunday morning that didn't stand the test on Monday at work or school?

This is painful truth, and Peter needed to hear it. Carson sums it up, "Tragically, the boast that he would never deny his Lord, even to the point of death, displays not only gross ignorance of human weakness, but a certain haughty independence that is the seed of the denial itself."<sup>5</sup>

So if you love someone like Peter, what do you do? What's the loving thing to do? You do what Jesus did. Not flatter. Not overlook. First, Jesus revealed some painful truth to Peter. Isn't this risky? Yes, but love takes the risk. And it doesn't stop there. Jesus didn't just reveal painful truth to Peter. That would be brutal. Secondly...

**B. Jesus revealed He would never give up on Peter.** I'm so encouraged by what Jesus told Peter in verse 36. *You will follow later.*

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<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 486). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 486). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

Peter, you have good intentions, but you're blind to the condition of your heart. You're going to deny me. But I'm not giving up on you. In fact, what I'm going to do on the cross tomorrow is for you. And on the basis of what I do, I'm going to restore you, and then you will follow Me.

Know this, my brothers and sisters...

1. *This is what He's done with us, too.* If we're His followers, it's because He revealed the painful, ugly truth about us, too, and our sin. But He didn't give up on us. Rather, He died for us, in our place, to deliver us and give us new life, and having conquered death, He's now the Living Savior who promises He will never give up on us, no matter what.

2. *This is what we're to do with one another.* "As I have loved you, *so you must love one another.*" There's the exhortation, and there's the example. As He did with Peter, so we are to do with the Peters in our lives.

It's not surprising that the person who wrote this gospel had much more to say about this subject of love. Listen to 1 John 2:14, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

And 1 John 4:19-21, "We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

Make It Personal: Ponder three questions...

1. *Have I experienced the love of Christ?* My non-believing friend, have you experienced the love of Christ? God so loved this world, including you, that He gave His Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Have you received this gift and experienced His love?

2. *Am I experiencing the love of Christ?* Remember, He is the vine, and we are the branches. Are you feeling the wonder day by day of His love? Are you asking Him to love people, difficult people, through you?

3. *Am I showing the love of Christ to my forever family?* "Just my forever family?" No, not just. But here's where we're to start, according to Jesus, and here's where our primary attention should be. "As I have loved you, *so you are to love one another.*"

This is how a hostile world will come to know about our Jesus, by seeing how we love each other.