

## John 14:15-21, 2014

I once saw a report on 20/20 about parents who show favoritism toward one of their children. There were two women, each with two small children, and each of the families had video cameras put in their homes to see if these women treated one of their children differently from the other. After a time the mothers watched the videos and sure enough it was evident that they were playing favorites.

One child would get punished for doing something that the other child would not get punished for. Mom was always on one child's case and not the other. One child would get sympathy for forgetting to bring home their school work, and the other would get punished for it.

Each mother admitted that one of their children just annoyed them to no end. The way they behaved, the way they did things, the way they communicated their needs; it seemed that almost everything about one of their two small children was a source of irritation for them.

All this stemmed from mom's thinking that one child was obedient and the other was not.

There is often a connection between “obedience” and, if not love itself, then the expression of love.

If you don’t obey, you don’t get any love, and children see this in black and white. It is deeply personal.

In an interview with the children who were the least favored, one of the children said, “Mom loves him more than she does me.”

In this documentary it was also perceived by the parents that any love in, or expressed by the least favored child, was veiled by disobedience.

The parents even may have seen, heard or experienced, “I hate you” in the behavior of the least favored child.

No parent intends to play favorites with their children; but it happens.

No parent intends to withhold their love from one child because they are “more trouble” than the other one; but it happens.

Our gospel lesson today seems to make a similar connection between obedience and love.

Jesus said to His disciples in the 1st verse of this passage;

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And then in the last verse, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Remember that this is part of Jesus' farewell discourse, His final lesson to the disciples as he says goodbye. This is important stuff, and he says it twice. If you love me you will keep my commandments.

And what are Jesus' commandments?

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

But does that mean you must earn Jesus' love? Does that mean that if you are disobedient you don't love Jesus and then He shuts you out, excludes you, rejects you?

Just because you don't obey Jesus does He then say "I don't love you?"

In human terms, from a human perspective, in human relationships, that may in fact be the result of being disobedient;

rejection, isolation, exclusion.

With Jesus, though, with God something different happens when you are disobedient. Something different happens when you don't love God because of your disobedience.

God is still there with you. You know that.

That is a part of your faith, it is what you believe, that is why you are here.

You know that you are a sinner and that you can't keep the commandments. But you also know that your sins are forgiven and that God continues to love you. If not Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection have no meaning.

Well if that is the case what does Jesus mean?

This is all about relationship, and I don't mean, "I know who you are but it doesn't matter.

I am talking about a close, intimate relationship marked by love, conversation, exchange, giving and receiving, in an ongoing connection.

Ask yourself what happens in a relationship with someone you don't love?

**NOTHING!**

There is no connection, no conversation, no getting to know one another, no exchange.

If you don't love Jesus how can you have a relationship with Him?

If you don't love God how can you receive and live in the blessing of His presence,?

How can you be open to Jesus' love & the Father's love when you don't love them?

Jesus is not setting up a prescriptive conditional relationship here in which you are loved only if you love, but describing what life with Him looks like.

Jesus' command is to love.

"You shall love the Lord you God with all you heart, and with all you soul, and with all you strength, and with all you mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Life looks like you loving Him and your neighbor, and Jesus and the Father loving you in that close intimate relationship.

As Lutherans many of you may have described yourselves as rather stoic, not ones who openly express love, and so this may take some working out I guess.

But, I don't believe you are so stoic that you don't feel anything.

Jesus calls you to that emotion of love. There is power in that emotion when there is passion in it. In that feeling is the power of life, the power **for** life,

the power to make life different for you and for everyone around you.

Jesus wants your love for Him to have a passion that carries you beyond just the emotion. A passion that drives you to action.

Love also means taking some action.

How do you love Jesus?

You love him by coming here weekly for worship. By giving thanks and praise for all the ways Jesus has been in your life, and what he has done for you in his suffering, death and resurrection.

You love Jesus by loving your neighbor.

Again it is not just emotional. What have you done for your neighbor lately?

Have you helped the needy, the hungry, the homeless with real clothing, food and shelter?

You love Him and your neighbor by going out to people who don't know and telling the story of His love for them, and sharing your story of relationship with Him.

Living life in love with Jesus changes your life. Living life in love with Jesus lights a fire in you that drives you to acknowledge His sovereignty in your life, and to the aid of your neighbor to make life better for them.

If you love Him you will have obeyed His commandments to love. I read a book by Tony Campolo entitled *Seize the Day*. He writes about *A Wild Love For God*.

He says, "There is a passionate love for God that He creates in us when we surrender to Him. It is this wild love for Him that is not only the basis for any real knowledge you have of God, but also the basis for a whole new way you can look at life. The god who calls us into an intensely personal and passionate relationship with Him transforms us through that relationship so that we encounter everything else in our lives conditioned by that passion..."

Passion, for the converted, is expressed and experienced in everything that is done and in all of life's encounters. We feel it in the way we worship, in the way we make love, and in the

way we play. The way we experience nature is marked by this passion. Everything, from the ways we taste food to the ways in which we read poetry, becomes intensely alive for the converted. All of life is lifted up so that in Christ we encounter it with a new awareness. This new and higher level of living is the abundant life Jesus promised in John 10:10.”

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Love of Jesus, love of God changes how you live.

Neither Jesus, nor the Father play favorites saying if you don't obey I won't love you; if you don't love me I am not going to love you back.

In obedience, in loving Jesus and neighbor you are given new life, life lived in love with Him; open to life in relationship to and with Him and the Father. Jesus is talking about living with your hearts open to the intensely personal and passionate relationship He wants to have with you.

In that love you share you are not orphaned by Jesus who died, but you are united with Him and the Father.



He in the Father,                      You in Him                      and Him in you  
Forever and ever.

Thanks be to God.