

## *John 15:9-17, 2015*

I don't know about you, but for me it can be hard to talk about love in any kind of way that reaches into the depth of what saying "I love you." means.

It feels to me that love conversation can seem so shallow because the word is so familiar, because it is used so casually.

It is hard to be clear what you are talking about because love covers such a wide array of meaning, and we only have the one word to use; love.

In New Testament Greek there are four words that are translated "love" with each giving more clarity to what the speaker means.

This gospel lesson is one that you can't just play with.

If you are going to learn from this lesson you are going to have to just about drown in it;

You have to let this passage have its way with you and your heart.

You either have to read it and move on, or you have to immerse yourself in it so that you experience the love rather than just hear the words

This little 4 letter word, Love, is used nine times.

Eight of those are in the first 5 verses.

It just occurred to me the other day that this passage can be so difficult to many because they have not experienced this love Jesus says He has for them.

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In fact I think it is safe to say that there are times when each of us have questioned Jesus' love for us.

Life can be tough and we do suffer. Where is that love then?

But, He says, "abide in my love."

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.."

"If you keep my commandments?" Jesus' love is sounding conditional all of a sudden. And what is His commandment?

Verse 12 says, "That you love one another as I have loved you."

Love one another.

Jesus is saying that in loving one another you experience His love, you abide in His love.

That is all it takes.

This is Mother's day, a day that is all about love.

Who can't love mom? Even when things aren't going right in that relationship deep in your heart you still love mom.

As a child you just can't help yourself, and for some this can be the source of great pain.

But you are always your mother's child, and love her.

Jesus gives us a great image of motherly love describing His own love for Jerusalem.

From the gospel of Matthew we read,

*John 15:9-17, 2015*

“How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...”.

This is love, love that protects, love that holds the children close, a mother’s love that claims her children and rejoices to have them home again.

This is Jesus’ love for you.

Love one another. In loving one another you abide in Jesus’ love.

Jesus did not say in being loved by the other you abide in my love.

You abide in Jesus’ love by giving not receiving, and in this you have the joy of Christ in you.

You receive a joy that is every bit as deep as the love out of which it comes.

I said before that love can be hard to talk about and so I think we have to have another outlet for the expression of our love.

Of course we give mom a card and flowers on Mother’s Day to say the things we can’t find words for.

But beyond those types of expressions of love, Jesus says again in this passage,

“I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

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As our expression of love both personally and as community then, we serve those around us who are in need.

These are acts of our love of God's creation, our love for humanity, the other person even if they are a stranger to us.

This is the way Jesus loved.

This is the way he loved the leper, the Samaritan woman at well, the blind man, His disciples, the world.

This is the way Jesus loves you.

It seems like Jesus knew that words were not enough, that some act was required for His followers to experience the love he had for them.

Here he is only hours before he is killed talking to His closest followers about love;

His love and the Father's love that lives in Him.

Here he is talking about loving His disciples, calling them friends fully aware they will all desert Him in the coming hours.

Here He is preparing them to bear the fruit of love in and for one another and for the world.

He then goes off to die.

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

Here is the act that speaks the true depth of God's love.

*John 15:9-17, 2015*

For those seeking to know God's love this act of sacrifice is where you may go to grasp the full depth of Jesus' love for you.

He gave all of himself so that you would know God's love.

This act of sacrifice, this dying is about saving you from your sin, yes. But there is more to it than that even.

Jesus shows His love, the Father's love for you, from the cross.

From there He joins you to the love He shares with the Father and you are caught up in the love that swirls and moves between them like a spring wind.

As that breeze blows over you, you are healed,

Jesus takes away a lifetime of guilt, a lifetime of not being good enough, a lifetime of feeling worthless

because you discover that His love has set you free from the past and made you worthy and good.