

Everyone needs to be loved. We all want to be welcomed in. We all want to have a place to belong. We want to know we're valued. We want to know we're accepted. We want to know that we're not being judged or given a sideways glance.

Maybe that's why mother's day is such an important holiday. Everyone has a mother. Sadly in some cases, dads can be out of the picture, but mothers stick with their children through thick and thin. Our mom is where many of us first felt that warm embrace of pure unconditional love.

Jesus also talks about love today. He says, "**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.**" God wired us to be beings who need love and need to love others. We are made in the image of God and just as God is love, so too we are people who need love. Today, THE TRIUNE GOD WELCOMES US INTO HIS PERFECT LOVE TO LOVE OTHERS.

First, I. The Triune God loves perfectly. The Bible teaches that God is love. Jesus tells us at the beginning of our Gospel lesson, "**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.**" We believe in one God in three persons. These are not two separate statements. They are interconnected. God being Triune and God being love fit hand in glove.

Because the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, they have the capability to love one another. Self-love is really not a true kind of love. If God was only one person, He could not be love in the same way. In God the Trinity we see there is a mutual self-giving of equals directed toward a common goal.

The Father loved the Son perfectly, giving Him all that He needed to complete His earthly mission. Jesus, the Son, loved the Father perfectly as He submitted to the Father's plan for salvation. The Holy Spirit loves perfectly as He works to make known the Father and the Son to the World.

In recent funerals for members who were mothers, the families suggested I read 1 Corinthians 13. Let me read that to you: "**Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.**" Perhaps we can think of our mothers as we read this passage.

Part of what we learn about love from 1 Corinthians 13 is that love always expresses itself in concrete actions. It isn't just about general feelings of romance, sentimentality, or kindness. It's about action. Love is a verb, not a noun. For mothers, maybe what that looks like is staying up late to nurse a screaming baby. Maybe that means changing stinky diapers. Maybe that means driving to yet another soccer practice, trumpet lesson, or dance practice. Maybe love means

looking your child in the eye and said she did great when she really didn't. Maybe love means not crying when you say goodbye to your son as you drop him off at college.

But as we look at 1 Corinthians 13, perhaps we can think of mom. Perhaps we can think of our spouse or a boyfriend or girlfriend, but we need to understand that 1 Corinthians 13 first and foremost talks about the Triune God's love. It talks about the love our Heavenly Father has for Jesus His Son.

But love isn't abstract, it makes itself known in concrete ways. The Triune God makes His love known to us through His Son, Jesus. II. The Triune God welcomes us into this love. He welcomes us into this love because we weren't there. Jesus goes on to say, **"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 hear this and we get uncomfortable. We get uncomfortable because we know that we have not kept God's commandments perfectly.

We don't often think of it this way, but love and commandments are two sides of the same coin. The teachings of the Bible are pure love. The Ten Commandments are not just ten random hoops to jump through, but they are ten aspects of what it means to be a loving person.

What does love look like? It involves the first commandment: fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things. The second commandment: calling upon God in every trouble and not using His name to curse. Love involves the third commandment: spending time in God's Word and receiving the Sacrament. Husbands, believe it or not, the best way to spend mother's day is to take your wife to church!

The fourth commandment: it is loving to honor father and mother, and those in authority over you. The fifth commandment: it is loving to take care of the bodily needs of others, and not to hurt others. The seventh commandment: we love when we don't try to scam people out of their hard-earned possessions and income. The eighth commandment: we love when we care about telling the truth and preserving the reputation of others. The ninth and tenth commandments: we love when we are happy with what we have and don't daydream what it would be like to have things and people that aren't ours.

Here's the most confusing one, obeying the sixth commandment, you shall not commit adultery, is in fact focused on love. God knows how powerful the gift of intimacy is and He created marriage to act as the only loving place for sexual intercourse.

And I'm sure this next part is going to get me labeled as a hater. It is not loving for any two consenting adults to do whatever they like with each other unless, of course, they're married. It is not loving to sleep with your girlfriend or boyfriend. It is not loving to accept any format of romantic relationship: man and

man, woman and woman, or whatever other permutation society has come up with lately.

Why am I saying this? Because I'm a bigoted hater who has a closed mind? No! I'm saying this because I can't love better than the Triune God, and God has told me through the Bible that's the way it is. Because God knows how hard it is to raise children and He knows mommas need daddies who are committed in a martial relationship. Because God knows that kids need a mom and a dad to grow up in this wild world. The Ten Commandments show us how to love, and especially the sixth commandment teaches us what true love is.

We all want to be welcomed in. We want people not only to like us, but to love us. Yet the fallen human condition is to seek love in all the wrong places. Eve thought that God was not being loving by forbidding her from eating the fruit, so she sought love elsewhere. A child thinks mom is being unloving when she commands him to eat his broccoli, A boyfriend thinks a girlfriend is being unloving by not sharing certain aspects of herself before marriage. Yet sin wants to call hatred love and selfishness selflessness.

But Jesus came to this Earth to show us true love. He tells us, **“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”** He lives a perfect life of love so that we may be filled with His joy. He lives a perfect life of love, showing us the ultimate love: **“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”** This is more than the love of a mother for her child. This is more than the love of a husband for a wife. It is the love of the Triune God for His loveless creatures: me and you, fallen humanity.

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”** Love isn't just a mushy feeling or a sentiment. It displays itself through action. Jesus showed us God's love by obeying those Ten Commandments perfectly. Jesus showed us the Father's love by dying on the cross. The Triune God's perfect love led Jesus to take on your sins and suffer in your place. Jesus has loved you with perfect divine love.

Love means I don't want you to suffer. Love means I can't live without you. Jesus' ministry culminated in His resurrection which is not just a footnote. It is Jesus saying to you, “I can't have you die in your sins and never see you again. I need you back. I need you to be with me forever.” Jesus' resurrection means that you'll live forever in the presence Triune God's perfect, holy love.

It was love that drove Jesus to forgive us. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, and by Jesus' command and authority, in Jesus' name I forgive you for you failure to love God perfectly. In Jesus' name I forgive you for your inability to call upon God but rather use His name as a curse. In Jesus' name I forgive you for the times you chose lazy Sundays rather than worship Sundays. In Jesus' name I forgive you for your failure to love your parents properly and your

failure to be a loving parent. In Jesus' name I forgive you for neglecting the needs of others. In Jesus' name I forgive you for all your sins of the sixth commandment: lustful thoughts, sexual sins, and past transgressions.

As a called and ordained servant of the Word, and as one whose job it is to proclaim and distribute Christ's forgiveness, I forgive you of your thefts of time, talent, and treasure. I forgive you in the name of our risen Lord for your gossip, slander, and lies. I forgive you in the name of Jesus for your jealousy, discontent, and covetousness.

Because we have this confidence that we are forgiven and washed completely clean in Jesus. We are freed to abide in His love. We are freed to live according to the Ten Commandments and not fear the consequences. And III. We love others with that same love. Jesus gives us a tall order in verse 12: “**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**” Yet as Christians, since we know the true source of love: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we can easily and readily share that love with others.

It's not always easy, I get it. As fallen humans, we often seek love in the wrong places and we try to label our sinful actions as loving actions. But as forgiven humans, we can daily rejoice as God welcomes us back into His love through the forgiveness of Jesus. That's what abiding in Jesus' love is: not getting every single thing right, but failing, asking for forgiveness, and rejoicing in being welcomed back into the fold.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to love others and this love conforms to the Ten Commandments. This love is the love of that the Father has shown Jesus, which He has shown us, and which we can then show to others. May we always fix our eyes on Jesus that we may love others with the love given to us. Amen!