

“LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY OF LOVE”  
Hebrews 10:19-25, I Corinthians 13, John 15:11-17  
June 23 & 24, 2018

“Designer clothes are known by their trademarks or designs. You can know if it’s a Tommy Hilfiger or a Ralph Lauren. They have trademarks that make them very visible and very identifiable.

“Those who hold an office of a unique kind can be identified by their attire. You can know a doctor by her attire or a policeman by his attire or a judge by his attire.

“God has sent forth something as irrefutable evidence that we are close to Him – an irrefutable test by which you can measure your own spiritual growth. In fact, so awesome is this trademark of God that He said it would be the major declaration of your faith. Jesus put it this way. He said, “*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another*” (John 13:35).”<sup>1</sup> Do people identify you with God through your love for others?

Today we continue to work our way through this series called, “Leaving A Lasting Legacy,” by looking at the topic of leaving a legacy of love. Indeed, love is a trademark of God’s touch on our lives, and it is love that transforms the world. So it is not surprising that throughout the New Testament of our Bible we have references and commands to love one another. Because we belong to God’s family we are to love one another.

The Epistle lesson of Hebrews 10 outlines where we have been and helps guide us today. Verses 22-24 say it clearly, “*So let us come near to God with a sincere heart **and a new faith**, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water. Let us **hold on firmly to the hope** we profess because we can trust God to keep His promise. Let us be concerned for one another, **to help one another to show love and to do good.**” This is the backdrop of being a Christian; establishing faith in Jesus Christ, holding on to the hope we have in God’s promises, and demonstrating our faith and hope through the love we*

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<sup>1</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evan’s Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 197, #583)

share with those around us. Without these characteristics firmly established in our lives, it is very difficult for us to call ourselves followers of Jesus. They are essential to our very lives.

1. As we look at this characteristic of love, we first have to come to understand that **Only In God Is Love Found THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!** Since we were all created in the image of God, it is only natural then for us to acknowledge that love first comes from God. It is not a natural element in the human condition. Love comes from God **THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!** I John 4:7-10 tells us this very clearly, *“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed His love for us by sending His only Son into the world, so that we might have life through Him. This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.”*

We know what love is because God first demonstrated love to us. Without God in our lives, we are unable to truly love. And God’s love is most perfectly exemplified by the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the One who modeled love for us and gives us the ability to love those around us. Jesus taught us how to love even those who would crucify us. He showed that love is much better than anger or hatred. Love is what frees us from other emotions that would seek to hold us in bondage and slavery.

2. So we really need to understand **What LOVE REALLY IS** in order to live in love and leave a lasting legacy of love. What is Love, Really? The Apostle Paul wrote instructions to the people in Corinth how they were to get along with one another. So in I Corinthians 13:4-8 he spells it out in a great definition of love so that we might truly know the difference of God’s love for us and what the world says is love. He says, *“Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal...”* What a great definition. I wish everyone would post this definition of love in their homes so that we could be reminded of it regularly and

demonstrate THAT kind of love to the world around us. What a difference it would make if we all shared this love with those around us. God's definition of love here in I Corinthians is so vastly different than what the world says love is that it is essential for us to distinguish the difference by the way that we live and interact with each other.

You see, **The World's Love is SELF-CENTERED**. Love in the world is getting all you can, as fast as you can, from whomever you can, for as long as you can. The world's love is focused on the self, that is, what's in it for me? People will start dating each other looking for "love," but actually what they are doing is looking to satisfy their own personal desires. The latest fad of "hooking up" is nothing but trying to find someone you can get to satisfy the lust in your heart. It's selfish; it's ego-centric; it's all about ME getting what I want. It's the mindset, "If the other person doesn't perform right or give enough, there are others out there that might satisfy MY desires. I'll get what I can from this person and then move on to the next. Any way that I can get satisfied." BUT THAT IS NOT LOVE!

Now you might say, "Pastor, that's a pretty harsh way of looking at it." But am I really that far off base here? Isn't the way the world says about love is all about meeting the desires of the SELF? As soon as there are troubles or difficulties or shortcomings, one or the other is out the door, on to the next one.

I invite you to look at John 12:5-6 if you think I'm wrong. This is one of Jesus' disciples, Judas, in response to a generous act of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, toward Jesus. The account reads, "*Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?*" [Judas] said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would help himself from it."

You see, Judas wasn't concerned for the welfare of others. He was focused on what was in it for him! His position of treasurer for the group was given to him by Jesus as a test to see if he would follow Jesus or follow the world. Judas failed and let his own desires rule in his heart and life. Only at the very end did Judas realize what he had done by betraying Jesus for 30

pieces of silver, but by then it was too late. He had already been hooked and enslaved by his greed and lust. That's the way the world shows love – it's all about the SELF and no one else.

But **God's love is SELF-GIVING!** It's not about what we can get out of it, but what we can give TOO it. Just look at the way that Mary saw the situation and showed real love to Jesus. *“Then Mary took a whole pint of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The sweet smell of the perfume filled the whole house”* (John 12:3). Where Judas was **selfish**; Mary was **selfless**. Mary offered Jesus her very best, not for what she was going to get out of it, but because of her great love and respect for Jesus as her Messiah. Mary looked beyond herself and touched Jesus' life in a spectacular way.

Just think about it a moment. Not only did Mary anoint Jesus' feet with the perfume, but *“she wiped [Jesus' feet] with her hair”* getting that precious perfume in her hair to take with her everywhere she went. Remember, she used a whole pint of the perfume on Jesus' feet. The fragrance of that generous offering of love to Jesus went with her and everyone around her knew what she had done. Her loving gesture became her trademark that was visible to everyone around her, wherever she went, and they were able to rejoice with her of the love she had for Jesus. That's God's love of self-giving, rather than self-centered.

So our genuine love shown to God influences the lives of others around us, too. As we give of ourselves, God's love becomes fragrant in our lives and because of that sweet perfume of love on us, others are not only attracted to us, but they desire to be close to us to enjoy that fragrance of love. People who are really in love with their Savior, Jesus Christ, give all they can to be serving Him wherever they go and whatever they do. And the result is unmistakable! The fragrance of that love is powerfully shared as we take it with us.

Real love is not selfishly getting all that you want from those around you, but it is giving of yourself to all those around you so that you might demonstrate the great love of Jesus to them. And that takes us to our third point:

3. **Jesus Set The STANDARD FOR REAL LOVE.** Jesus didn't have to come down

from heaven to be with us here on the earth. Yet because of the great love of God for this world, Jesus freely gave of Himself for our sake so that we could really see what love is. Listen to how Jesus says it to His disciples in John 15. (READ John 15:9-17)

Every time I seriously look at these words of Jesus, I am absolutely astounded of the love He has for us. Right at the beginning of this section, Jesus tells the disciples “*I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love*” (Jn. 15:9). All of Jesus’ life was showing God the Father’s love for us, inviting us into that close, intimate relationship like Jesus has with His Father. The very love that God the Father has for Jesus Christ the Son is so far beyond our own comprehension, yet it is clear that God’s love is self-giving, never ending, always present, and recklessly available to each of us, **THROUGH JESUS**.

I like the way that Cory Asbury has described this love of God in his song, “Reckless Love of God.” Listen to the chorus;

*“Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine.*

*I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away.*

*Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God.”*

That’s the great love of God given to Jesus, AND given to us BY Jesus. It is a love that is completely self-LESS, looking for good and welfare of another with complete disregard for what’s in it for me. The love of Jesus was completely FOR US, and TO US! There’s no greater love than that! And Jesus puts it very clearly, “*The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them*” (Jn. 15:13). Jesus’ love for us is a self-giving love, and He wants us to “*remain in [that kind of] love*” so that others can see what love really is as we model Jesus’ love for the world. It’s NOT lustful, greedy, self-seeking, or prideful. Jesus’ love is completely given for the benefit of all those who will receive it. And as we become followers of Jesus, He calls us to live in that kind of love so that we might demonstrate His love to the world.

So 4. **We Are Invited To FOLLOW JESUS’ EXAMPLE**. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to live like Him in this great demonstration of love. After all, that’s what Christian means

– Little Christ. We as Jesus’ followers are to model our lives after the example of Christ so that all people might see that we belong to Him, that we have His trademark stamped on our life and on our hearts, in order to live in a way that allows others to come to Him, too. AND THAT TRADEMARK IS LOVE! Self-less, unassuming, overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God for the world around us.

And Jesus says it like this, *“You did not choose Me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of Him in My name”* (Jn. 15:16) so that we might accomplish the great commission for the world and bring all people to know God through Jesus. There’s no better way to reach another person for the Gospel of Jesus Christ than to show them extravagant love – no matter how bad they are, or how selfish they are, or how arrogant they are, or how belligerent they are, or how rude they are, or any other way that they are. Love given to a person can transform their life to the point that they can come to know Jesus and ask Him to be their Savior, too. Yes, it can be hard to do! Yes, they may make your life hell for a while! Yes, you may not feel like you want to even be close to them because of the way they treat you in return, but if you show love to someone else, it will transform their life.

Again, Jesus put it like this; *“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 one another, just as I love you”* (Jn. 15:11-12). Showing love to one another is for the purpose of completing Jesus’ joy for us so that we might have complete joy In Him. So when we have Jesus’ joy in us, we can share that joy with others as we show love to them. And without love, it is impossible to accomplish anything! Our showing love to the world is what brings joy to us. No love, no joy. No joy, a rotten world. And that means that we need to find something new in our own lives so that we might show love to one another.

5. **This Means A Complete TRANSORMATION FROM THE WORLD.** We cannot have the love of Jesus in our life if we are focused on following the ways of the world. We have

to turn from the things of this world so that we might experience and then share the love of Jesus with those around us. It is impossible to live in and of the world and live in and of Jesus Christ. To fully receive the joy of Jesus, we have to “*no longer be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so that we might prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect*” (Romans 12:2). We must live in the love of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul gives us a good example of this. He says in I Corinthians 13:11, “*When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; not that I am a man, I have no more use for childish ways.*” A transformation must occur in our lives so that we give up on all the worldly ways and begin to live in the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot live in both, just like we cannot live like a child and live like an adult at the same time. It’s one or the others. So what does that look like?

For me to show my wife Linda that I love her, I can’t always look out for what I want, selfishly demanding her to do things the way that I want them done, neglecting her needs and desires, and treating her with disrespect. If I were to do this and then tell her that I love her, she would just laugh at me. (She’s saying to herself right now, “You got that right, buddy”) That’s not love, only selfishness. For me to properly show love to my wife, I have to let go of “what’s in it for me,” I have to give of myself for her, and I have to treat her the way I would want to be treated. To show love to my wife, I have to give up on doing the things that this world calls for and begin living the way that Jesus calls me to live. It means that I must be willing to sacrifice myself for her, even my own life, so that she knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that I really, truly love her. Am I there yet? NO! She deserves much better. Sadly I am still being transformed by the renewing of my mind so that I might do the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. It’s a journey, and I have a long ways to go to show Linda how much I love her.

But I am confident of this promise of 2 Corinthians 5:17-18. “*When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. All this is done by God, who*

*through Christ changed us from enemies into His friends and gave us the task of making others His friends also.”* The old ways of the world in us have long tendrils that want to keep us mired in the ways of this world. But when we come to Jesus Christ and seek to follow Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, those cords and chains of the old ways are cut off and new life begins. I have to keep following the love of Jesus and give myself to letting that love become a part of me so that I can share that love to my family, my neighbors and to all those around me. And each one of us needs to put on the love of Jesus so that we are stamped with His trademark of love.

So 6. **How then CAN WE ACCOMPLISH THIS?** How can we continue to move away from the things of this world into a relationship with Jesus in order to show love to the world?

Hebrews 10:25 explains well. *“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming near.”* This gathering that we call “church” is for the purpose of challenging each other to grow closer in our relationship with Jesus. We are to continue to encourage, challenge, love on, and build up each other so that we can then go out into the world around us and make a difference for Jesus in the lives of those around us in the love of Christ. This time together is to nourish and heal and empower each of us to be the living witnesses of the love of Jesus in our world. So what happens here in this place doesn’t stay here. It is to impact us enough to take out there (outside the walls of this place) what we learn here so that we can share with everyone that God desires them to walk with Him.

Jesus tells us this, *“...You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father”* (John 15:14-15). We are friends of Jesus if we follow His commands. And as we take His trademark upon ourselves, we begin to live differently than the rest of the world so that we might show His love to those

around us, especially the difficult ones. We have our marching orders from Jesus, “*love one another*” (Jn. 15:17).

So let us go from this place doing all we can to show the love of Jesus to the world, to whomever we can, for as long as we can, in all the ways that we can, so that we might be known as followers of Jesus because of our love. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.