

## I Love You

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). “*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*” (John 15:12). “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:17). “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (I John 4:11). As you read these verses, I am sure you come to the unequivocal understanding that God wants us to love each other. As pastor of Christchurch, I find the love in our midst is not “put-on,” but real. I would like you to know I love you. Let me give you some reasons why I love you.

### **1. I love you because you love the Lord**

This has to head the list! The Bible says in I Corinthians 13:1-3, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*” If we say we have love for God, but really do not, then our ministry, as the Bible says, makes us merely sounders of racket rather than worshippers in truth. If we don’t love God, our ministry, as well as life, will pass us by without lasting effect on either time or eternity. This reality is seen in these verses of inspiration: “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (I John 2:15-17). Love to God motivates us to be centered in His will and that which is done under the category of God’s will shall last forever!

### **2. I love you because you love those within our fold.**

Our Lord made it plain when He said, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (John 13:35). We live in a dog-eat-dog world, full of bullies, brats, and bothered, selfish people. How thankful I am that Christchurch is a haven where brothers and sisters in Christ love each other. Truly, in the Body of Christ there are no strangers. Already I miss Jim Hoskins. Let me tell you a story about Jim, one of the most faithful attendees at this church who recently passed into Glory. Jim was a very busy man, who always had a lot on his plate. If you casually met Jim you might mistakenly think he was all business. One day one of the young men in our church preached one of his first sermons. Jim noticed the young man had been through some trials and his outfit was a bit on the ragged side. Without hesitation, Jim took this young man to a nice men’s shop, fitted him up with a fine suit of clothes and paid for it completely without letting anyone know about it. I would not even had known this unless while talking to his family, this previously unknown story became known to me. Jim personified the heart of Christchurch. I could take up the rest of this article and fill up two more articles with nothing but stories of the kindness of our people. I see our people commit, not random acts of kindness, but they do them on purpose! May the world see how we love one another and may they say of us as was said of Jesus at the graveside of his friend, Lazurus, “*Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!*” (John 11:36).

### **3. I love you because you love those without the fold.**

We had a great night of soul winning this past week! To God’s glory, we had people saved and receive assurance of their salvation. The visitation effort was manned by some hard working folks. I am thinking of Jonathan Zimmerman, who, last week won his second soul to Christ. This was not accomplished by a guy who necessarily has time on his hands. Jonathan is holding down two jobs, but

made the time to be a witness! Jesus so loved the world, that when He associated with those who needed Him, these accusations were leveled at Him: *“The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children”* (Matthew 11:19). Jesus was definitely neither a gluttonous man nor a drunkard. Isn't it sad - when comments are motivated by hatred and jealousy, it is like a cutting edge that wounds. However, when words of love are spoken, it is like a balm that heals. And by the way, this is exactly what Jesus was doing, He was healing the hurting. The one statement the Pharisees got correct was that He was a friend of sinners. Was it worth it to love those outside the fold this way? Please notice the phrase at the end of the previous verse that says, *“But wisdom is justified of her children.”* Mathew Henry likens our Lord in this context to a Physician whose remedy works and cures. In other words, the proof of His rightness is the outcome. Two verses come to mind with this phrase: *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise”* (Proverbs 11:30). *“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”* (Jeremiah 8:22). Christ lovingly and wisely seeks to save those who are lost and when He, the Great Physician finds the sinner, he recovers from the fall! In the words of L.R. Scarbrough, may we ever be “with Christ after the lost.”

#### **4. I love you because you have loved me and my family.**

Elizabeth Barret Browning said, "I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you for the part of me that you bring out." Forgive me if I seem self-serving in this paragraph, but I would be remiss to not bring out the fact of my deep appreciation for your unconditional love for this pastor and his family. Because of your love to me, I am a better person. It is a blessing to serve God with a flock where love is freely given, not earned. Paul said, *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again...”* (Philippians 4:10). I appreciate the apostle's use of the word “flourish.” It means to grow in a healthy or vigorous way. It means a bold or extravagant gesture. It also depicts a fanfare or ornate musical passage played by a brass instrument, such as *a flourish of trumpets*. Mrs. Pope and I have enjoyed the vigorous fanfare of your love! You have put music in our hearts.

#### **5. I love you because you hate sin.**

Billy Sunday said, “You can't love flowers unless you hate weeds and you can't love Jesus unless you hate sin.” Thank you for loving sinners, yet at the same time hating sin. In the devotional thought given in the deacon's meeting last Thursday night, Joe Henshaw commented that he loved the way I did not hold back in my preaching. How sad that many a pastor feels he has to weigh carefully what he says in the pulpit for fear of unkind scrutiny from a sin-loving congregation who gets her “dander” up if you even look like you are going to address sin they are not only committing, but loving to do so. Paul addressed those who were in the most severe stage of loving their sins when he said, *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:32). When I think of Christchurch, this verse comes to mind: *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Corinthians 6:11).

#### **6. I love you because you have patience.**

Patience is a microscope that magnifies the love of God in someone's heart. We have been through a lot together. We wait for Christ's soon return while we, at the same time, wait for Christ to come in spiritual renewal until He comes again. We endure what must be endured, knowing that God is moving, seldom early, but never late. The waiting process has brought this church to a greater capacity of love. My prayer is in synch with the Apostle who said, *“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,*

*and into the patient waiting for Christ” (II Thessalonians 3:5).*

Continue to not be angry with God or people due to the interruptions in your schedule or delay in your dreams. Keep dreaming, keep praying, keep believing and above all – keep loving! *“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31).*

- Pastor Pope -

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