

# Romans 12.9–13

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## *Love: one another*

Amington (St Editha)

Sunday 13 August 2017

### **Love**

We are thinking about love this summer – last week about loving God, this week about loving one another.

How do boats ask each other out?

They say, ‘Are you up for a little *row-mance*?’

I saw this bloke chatting up a cheetah and I thought, ‘He’s trying to pull a fast one.’

If you don’t like the jokes, you have a week to email me any good ones about love, for me to include in next week’s sermon!

Last week we looked at the different kinds of love, and the way affection, friendship and desire all come quite naturally to us – though they are not always for appropriate things or people. But the deepest, most beautiful kind of love – *agapé* – does not come naturally to us, which is why Jesus had to *command* us to do it.

Last week we heard how Jesus quoted the Old Testament Law, and commanded us to love God *first*.

One of the puppets earlier had got that message, *sort of*. He was being very superior to the other puppets, saying that he was too busy loving God to bother with the others who needed his help.

But the superior puppet forgot something very important about what Jesus said: Jesus said that loving God is the ‘first’ not the ‘only’ commandment. The second most important commandment is to love one another as we love ourselves.

In fact, the two commands go together – we need to do both. If we ignore the second commandment, like the superior puppet, then there is a question mark over whether we are *really* obeying the first commandment.

The Bible says this:

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

*1 John 4.20-21 (NIV)*

## Love: one another

So this week we are thinking about loving *one another*, that is, our Christian brothers and sisters. (Next week we will look at loving our *neighbours*, that is, the people outside our church family.)

Sometimes people ask me what my vision is for this church family. Over the last year I've all sorts of thoughts and ideas, hopes and dreams. I've seen lots of different possibilities – but how's this for starters?

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

*Romans 12.9-13 (NIV)*

I don't think there are many churches that have managed to live this out in full – but it is what we are aiming for. **Be devoted to one another in love**, Paul says (10). **Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer** (12). Our church family should be a place of love, joy, patience and faithfulness.

Our service shouldn't be complaining or grudging, but fervent and passionate, showing honour to our brothers and sisters. This is what it means to love one another.

How do you think we're doing as a church family? Paul's summary here describes real, deep, sacrificial love – but how often churches are full of niceness rather than love, acquaintances rather than brothers and sisters, pretending rather than sharing. How often we put on a front at church because we are afraid of how people would judge us if they knew what we were really like.

Friends, do you want our church family to be full of niceness, acquaintances, pretending and judgement? No? *Make them say it out loud!*

Friends, do you want our church family to be devoted, zealous in service, joyful, patient, faithful, hospitable? Yes? *Make them say it out loud!*

You – we – need to take responsibility for this. We need to take seriously Jesus' command to love one another – Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all repeat it in the New Testament.

How? It's homework time!

Perhaps this week you could get out your Bible and turn to Romans 12.9-13. If you forget the reference, don't worry – it's on your news sheet right there at the top.

Read the verses through slowly, two or three times. Perhaps one or two of the commands will jump out at you – maybe **be sincere**, or **be faithful in prayer** (that's mine). And then do it – look for an opportunity to show love, to show *real* love to one of your brothers or sisters in our church family.

Because friends, our church family will never change and grow, it will never become more healthy, more loving, unless *we* change and become more loving. It's as simple as that, really!

Earlier on I asked you what sort of church family you wanted – one full of niceness, or one full of real, deep, love.

We are now going to spend a few moments in silence, reflecting on the way all of us have failed to love one another as we should. And then – if you want – I will invite you to make a decision, a decision to love one another *more*, to let God's love fill us and overflow in love for one another.