

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS

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Lesson: John 15

This morning we read part of a long talk which the Lord gave to His disciples on the night of the last supper; the very night that the Lord was crucified. He was teaching His disciples—teaching them about His great love for them; and time and time again during this talk, He told them that if they would keep His commandments, He would be able to give them His love as fully as possible. This is why, after teaching them, He said to them, “If you love Me and keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things have I spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” This was the reason why the Lord came on earth—so that people would be able to learn about Him, and obey Him, and that in this way He could give them happiness.

In the passage that we read, the Lord went right on to say: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” That very night the Lord showed His disciples how much He loved them; for that very night He allowed the Jews to mock Him, to laugh at Him, and to crucify Him. He allowed this because He saw that this was the way in which He could lead people to heaven; He laid down His life so that His disciples, who believed in Him, could be saved. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”

You know, we often say that we love our mother and father, or that we love our friends, and that we are willing to do things for them; but do we love them in the same way that the Lord loves us? Often we give up something that we want very much so that a friend may have it instead; but do we give it up just because we love that friend? Or do we give it up because we think that by doing so we can get something back from that friend? For example: a boy may have a piece of candy, which he wants to eat himself; but because the friend who is with him also would like to have that piece of candy, he gives it to him instead of eating it himself. If he does this just because he likes his friend, this is loving a friend in the same way as the Lord loves us. But if he does it because he thinks that in this way he will be able to borrow his friend’s bicycle, then he is doing it for a selfish reason, and this is not real love.

That is why the Lord said that the greatest love a person could show is his willingness to die for a friend. So often, when we give up something for a friend, it is for a selfish reason, so that we may get something out of it; and if we cannot see anything that we can get out of it, then we will not do it. How often do we ask ourselves, "What good is this going to do me? Why should I do it? I do not benefit by it." But this attitude is selfish; this is not love for other people.

But if a person is willing to die for a friend, then you cannot say that he is being selfish at all, because what can he possibly get in return from his friend? After he has died, his friend has no way of paying him back. This is why we honor and respect men who are willing to go out and fight and die for their country, because they are giving up everything they have in this world so that their friends can live in peace and happiness, free from their enemies. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." When people like this come into the other world, the Lord will reward them with the joy of heaven, and they will find a new and happier life.

But the Lord does not ask us all to give up our lives. The important thing He taught us when He gave this commandment is that we are not to be selfish in our love of other people; that we must be willing to give that piece of candy to a friend of ours, not so that he will feel that he has to lend us his bicycle tomorrow, but just because he is a friend, and we want very much to see him happy. If we can do this all the time, then we will have a love for other people which is just as great as was the love of those men who died for their country; because then we love others more than we love ourselves; and this is what the Lord wants us to do. The only way we can be truly happy, is if we feel this way towards others.

But this is not an easy thing to feel, is it? All of us are selfish a lot of the time. We look around for things which will give us pleasure, and we do not want to give up our pleasures just to give happiness to someone else. We do not feel this wonderful love for others within us, except now and then. Instead we love ourselves, and not others. We want to make ourselves happy, not others.

But the Lord is the only Person who can really make us happy; and He has given His Word, His teachings, so that we can become happy; and in that passage that we read, He has said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

The Lord can slowly change our selfish loves into this beautiful, heavenly love for other people, if we will allow Him to do so, and if we will try hard to do what He tells us. If we pray to Him, and ask Him for help; and if we then start by doing little things for other people, even when it means giving up something we want, then the Lord will give us this love. At first we will find that it is a hard thing to do—helping a friend, just because we like them, without expecting to be paid back. But if we keep on doing it, the Lord will pay us back. He will give us the love, and the happiness, of the angels; for we are told that nothing is more pleasing to the angels than to do something which makes someone else happy. This is the delight which they live for, and this is what makes heaven such a wonderful place, a place where we could live forever, and always be happy. *Amen.*