Title: The Mark of a True Christian

Description: In this Sunday evening message from John 13:34-35 and Romans 12:9-10, Pastor Anthony Kim of Calvary Road Baptist Church opens part 1 of the series Anatomy of Christ's Church. Against an age of digital connection and human isolation, Jesus' new commandment in the upper room, that ye love one another as I have loved you, and Paul's call to let love be without dissimulation, abhor evil, cleave to good, and in honour prefer one another, show that self-sacrificial love is the unmistakable mark of a true Christian. The sermon calls the church to a week of prayer and fasting so that Christ's love would flow through His body, and it invites those who do not yet know Him to behold that fellowship and come to Him.

Transcript:

...evening. I want to voice something that I know many of you may feel at the depths of your bones. We live in an age in which we are in an unprecedented speed of digital connection and profound human isolation. With that, algorithms curate our feeds to keep us locked on our screens as long as possible. Artificial intelligence mimics even our very conversations. People actually creating clones of themselves and screens mediate our relationships. Whatever happened to prayer and living according to God's word? As a Christian leader recently put it so clearly and I have put this in our announcements. As our world becomes more artificial, the church should become more human.

And so this evening, we're going to launch into week one of our new six-week sermon series titled Anatomy of Christ's Church. The series is designed to examine the vital organ which is the heart, the structure, the bones and then the relational sinews. Sinews meaning the vitality, the very things that bind the muscle and the bones to enable us to move spiritually. And this is then a healthy spiritual body serving as God's direct answer to the artificiality, the coldness and the fracture of our modern age.

It goes without saying the one and others found in scripture is what Christ wants for his church. This morning we looked at Mark chapter 3 with verses 31-35. And we saw the Lord Jesus illustrating him stretching out his own hands over the vast crowd and he stretches his hands specifically towards his disciples and he's simply with the words this is my mother this is my brethren meaning they who are doing the will of God is the true family of God. And we saw that found in Matthew's gospel. And then when his biological family

stood outside wanting to get a hold of him to gain custody, Jesus asked again with the phrase, "Who is my mother or my brethren?" And looking around said, "Behold my mother and my brethren." And I said this, I'll repeat it again. He said, ""For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.""

Sunday morning message established who we are. We are blood-bought by the blood of Christ. We are grace-shaped by our adoption, spiritual adoption into the family of God. But tonight, I want us to turn to the vital question, how this family must live. How does the family of God live? How do the members of God's household treat one another when the world is watching?

We're going to turn our hearts to our foundational text which is found in John chapter 13 as well as in Romans chapter 12. But go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 13 beginning in verse 34. And when you get there, please go ahead and stand out of respect for God's word and follow along in your Bible as I read from John chapter 13, beginning with verse 34 to verse 35. The Lord Jesus says these words, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Then turn to Romans chapter 12 and we're going to be in verses 9 and 10 for the reading of God's word. Romans chapter 12, verses 9 and 10. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." And this is God's word. You may be seated.

Notice in John chapter 13:34-35 the repetition of love one another. It's repeated not once not twice but three times within rather three times four times in just two verses. Meaning it's very important to the Lord Jesus Christ to share this very truth to and for us to fully grasp the weight of this very command that is given by the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us to look at the depth of his words.

So we're going to do that now. Let me just project to you the setting of when he said this. It was a night before his crucifixion in the upper room and it was during the last supper which is the final meal the Lord Jesus shared with his disciples before his arrest and trial the next day. The sense of impending separation had added a unique and special tenderness that he embodied as he was addressing this command to his disciples.

After all, he had appointed his disciples. And he also gives this very affectionate name to them in verse 33 in the text before as you see little children. The Lord speaks to disciples as little children. He does not say my children. Notice that they are not. Nowhere are believers called the children of the Lord Jesus. No, the Lord Jesus speaks to them as children of God our heavenly father. It is the name of a sweet relationship that brings about the feeling of vulnerability. Think of a little child who depends even upon feeding upon much because the lack of understanding, the lack of ability. And so this great characteristic of the family of God then is at the heartbeat of Christ is love.

Because God is love. So because God is love, we can love. And so while the Lord Jesus is surrounded by glory right now in the heavens, the children of God on earth are to love each other. Disciples had held together because he was in their midst.

Think about it. The initial following of the Lord Jesus. How many disagreements and tensions were with the disciples years before this last supper? You see, it is because the Lord Jesus is in the midst that they can be put together. And so if you think about it,

If you ever seen an arch, where is the essential piece that keeps the arch together? It's the very keystone. The keystone at the very top of the arch. In many ways, that is what we see here. The disciples are the arch and the Lord Jesus Christ is the keystone. There's even passages like he is the chief cornerstone. So no, he would guard them from the disintegrating in tendencies that were such to set forward when he is gone.

Think of Judas Iscariot left the very dinner to betray him. And then shortly before Jesus predicted Peter's denial and anticipation of those two men, he says these words, this command, love one another. And he would point them to a comfort for his absence for he would not be with them for too much longer. And he wants to bring them comfort with these words. He also brings a kind of substitute for his presence that when you love one another just like I have loved you as Christ said to them. For to love the brethren whom they see would be in some sense then a continuing to love the Lord Jesus whom they had ceased to see.

And so immediately after he said, "Whither I go, ye cannot come," he goes on to say, "love one another as I have loved you." And he called this a new commandment. Though to love one neighbor as oneself was familiar amongst

the Jews. We see from Leviticus 19:18. Love your neighbor. We also see Jesus taught this in Matthew 22:37-39 and Mark 12:30-31.

But his commandment proposed a new object of love which is his disciples and to the then to the extended Christian community which expand on the love neighbors to now love unconditionally towards those who would fail us who would betray us. Think about it. He said this again before Judas went and betrayed him, before Peter's denial. Isn't that helpful? Isn't that comforting? Knowing that again, Jesus understands when people betray us. He understands when people deny the Lord Jesus Christ. And sets forth this new measure of love which is self-sacrificing humble love that the Lord Jesus Christ displayed throughout his earthly ministry and was so greatly different from all that had preceded before that it is on almost a new kind of love which is his direct modeling of that love which is the Lord Jesus Christ himself that's the new kind of love that he displayed while here on earth and also suggests and supplies a new motive the power of love which is again Christ himself giving of self-sacrificial love towards us as believers and this commandment displays then this kind of love from the giver himself therefore it comes to us as a new commandment and it's holy and freshly applicable today as in the ages that it was given.

And the new thing about this commandment that the Lord gives is that he gives the life by which disciples can love one another. The commandment is therefore a supernatural occurrence that we do it as a matter of course. It's part of us. The love of Christ in us towards others. And it's a commandment that is true in Christ and has been realized by him. And because it is realized by him by his own life, it is then also true of us and can be fulfilled by us.

I want you to turn with me to 1 John 2:8 where we can see this in the words of Jesus. He says again, "A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Just stay there because I am going to reflect on this particular text to show you that the love that he displayed and modeled is for us to model as well.

First, I want us to look at that it's an old command made new. The command to love one another. It is an old command because it was taught from the beginning of the Christian faith rooted in again that Old Testament text from Leviticus 19:18 to love your neighbor. And is new because Jesus Christ redefined it and deepened it through his own life, his own sacrifice. And then the new covenant which is John 13:34 which I shared at the beginning of the

introduction.

Then we look at that is true in him and in you. The reality the truth of this love was first perfectly demonstrated in him the Lord Jesus. And then it becomes real in you believers in Christ that you actively live out and your intimate walk with the Lord deepens.

Just look at 1 John 2:6, for example. And then we go on and we see this phrase, the darkness is passing away, which means that the reign of spiritual darkness due to sin and hatred and ignorance of God is actively fading out and it's not completely gone yet, but it's eventually is because of Christ's work. You see, Christ's work not only was for the immediate, but for the future. And what we're going to see is all darkness pass away. That's a wonderful thing to think about as you're currently living right now in the darkened place.

And then he goes on and says, "A true light is already shining." Again, anticipating this light that is going to shine forever and ever and ever. So Jesus Christ is the true light. 1 John 1:9, John 8:12, that he has entered into the world and continues to shine brightly through the transformed lives and love of his people. He is revealing his true light in his people. We are the light. We are that continual light until it shines ever more brightly in Jesus Christ.

You see, this cannot be said of the old law. It was to simply love our neighbors. And now we have this new commandment amongst the Christians that are going to be the light and salt of the world because the light has been given to us. What a thing to think about to meditate on.

But here's what I want to continue to share. You see, obedience to this commandment is the bond that holds Christian men and women together in their common relation with who? To the one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this measure in which we are filled with Jesus Christ is the same measure that he's giving out of his spirit and out of his life. And then that same model is the expression that we then display. He gives us his spirit. He gives us his life not just for us but to share his spirit and his life.

But Christian love is no emotions as we see here is a spiritual work and it's not just full of pleasant words. He doesn't say much. He just says love one another. He doesn't define it in this long paragraph ways of saying love. No, it's simply this that true Christian love is self-sacrifice. It's self-sacrifice. That word love one another is self-sacrifice.

Christian love is pure. It's prepared for service. It's courageous and prepared to be a martyr if it's needful. Love's language then defined by Christ himself is self-sacrifice. He said, "I give myself to thee." That is the model we are to then follow in our Lord Jesus Christ towards other believers and that is the pattern that is set before us all. He says, "as I have loved you."

So Jesus is speaking to us to live in this constant awareness of Jesus Christ's sacrifice which was a very high price that he paid for our sins on Calvary's cross. And he is the keystone of the arch that keeps us in continual love for one another. He is with us. He is present with us by his spirit. And so when he departs, what will then keep his disciples from fracturing? Love one another. That's what we see here.

So this love is found from the very life of Christ imparted to us. When we are adopted into God's family, as we saw in Mark chapter 3 this morning, we received a new nature. That this new nature breeds self-sacrificial love. That's the heartbeat of a Christian. That is the new nature that has been given to us. A new heart, a new spirit in which we can truly love one another unconditionally.

And that's why Christianity spread so quickly. Trust was built so fast because it wasn't transactional. And so people trusted and people was open to the gospel and open to this new Christian community that could not be done any other way than human connection. It cannot be done through digital connection. That's actually a hindrance because we need to be together. The anatomy of Christ's church is loving one another. We're not loving a computer. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I will be in the midst." Not two and a computer or one and two computers. It's your flesh and blood body gathering together.

So that is the definition of love according to Christ himself.

Now let's look at how this looks further down into Romans 12:9 and 10 where we see the posture of our love. Turn with me to Romans 12, verses 9 to 10. Romans 12, verses 9 and 10. We're going to see here in this text, how does this love manifest in the messiness of the day-to-day reality of the local church? Of the local church. After all, you're dealing with not only your sin, you're dealing with other people's sin. And sin causes a lot of mess, doesn't it? But we're going to see how loving one another as Christ loved us that we can make that messiness something beautiful.

So the apostle Paul unpacks this wonderful text in Romans 12:9-10. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Here Paul is not so much prescribing love as much as describing the kind of love which he recognizes as genuine and is the main point on which he insists is true sincerity kind of love. Genuine love.

So let's look at that word dissimulation and what it means. It could mean hiding what one is. But there's also simulation which is pretending to be what one is not. So let me say that again. Dissimulation which is found in our text is hiding what one is. Pretending hypocrisy. But the KJV it doesn't give it only gives half and that's why the other half is simulation. Simulation and again that means pretending to be what one is not.

So Paul's use of words is not to speak words of love which can have deep hatred behind it. Meaning say a bunch of loving words but in your heart you actually hate that brother or hate that sister. That's another way to say this. He's also not is also saying very carefully such love that pours itself in flattery words with this simulation is represented by selfishness. Selfishness. This simulation at the heart of it is selfishness not self sacrificial. So we got to be careful with our words. Remember the words of Jesus. Love one another as I have loved you.

We must not just state love one another. You must continue with love one another as Christ loved us. That's the complete sentence. That's the complete love. It doesn't end with my love for you, Pastor Kim's love for you. No, no, no. It has to be rooted in Christ's love for me, Pastor Kim, and then Pastor Kim love to you. It must be at the source that flows from Christ himself. See, dissimulation is just "love one another" and that can be very much just like the world.

More on this passage is that we have a whole series of exhortations here and I want us to be encouraged by this text. That's the main thrust of the apostle Paul here is for your exhortation, your encouragement. And these are all things that we deal with every day. We deal with this kind of stuff every day. This text tells us how to live then every day as a Christian.

Notice that they're short pointed sentences just like the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 9, rather Romans 12:9, the passage begins with love. With love.

Love must be without hypocrisy which means again without hidden purposes. Everything is laid before our hearts to you. This is how the Lord Jesus was.

He displayed his heart perfectly. And that perfect love is given to us. Get this. We have to receive his perfect love in order to love another.

If we just love from our brokenness, our fractured love, then we will also give out of broken love and fractured love. It's not complete. It's not complete. It's not the kind of thing that Paul's exhorting. No, it must be complete love. There should be no hiddenness in it. Nothing of the simulation, nothing of simulation. It must be from Christ himself because his love cannot be found in the world. That's why he says they will know that you are my disciples. The world would know that you're my disciples by your love for one another. It cannot be found in the world. And that's why it must come from Christ himself, which he promised he will do.

So love must be directed into this path of living not only out of this pure intention that comes from Christ himself. But notice continuing on in the text in verse 9, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

Paul's exhortation here is that the healthy passion against evil and determined clinging to good is the essential as it were part of a Christian and his love. That's part of Christian love is a hatred for sin. Hatred for anything that is against God and against his word. Whatever found and however clothed that may be ought to be continual reminder of all of us to vigorously join to that which is good. That's what cleave means. It's a vigorous joining to that which is good and abhorring or turning away from evil. This must be done on a constant basis as a reflection of what Christian love is.

So you cannot love if it's not out of good intention. Love if it's out of evil intention will reveal itself. So we then see the expression continuing on with the words kindly affectioned which is the rendering of a persuasive word in the original in which its instinctive is a love of a mother to her own child.

We are taken as an example after which Christian men are to mold their relationship to one another in this way not only women. So again it's something that is beyond human understanding this affection that Christ gives to us. It cannot be explained with worldly words. It can only be defined by this is the love that Christ gives to us.

And so Romans 12:10 goes on and he goes on and says that we do are to do this kindly affection one to another with brotherly love. He adds that with condition with brotherly love. You see in this evil world there is a unique type of fellowship called the fellowship of the brethren. This is what he's talking about when we talk about fellowship. This is the text. This is the text with

brotherly love.

You see, all those who are children of God belong to this fellowship of the brethren. And in this verse, we are exhorted to be another way of saying it, devoted to one another. Think about that. We talking we talk a lot about I'm going to have devotion with God, meaning a deep love and a deep affection for our God, our father.

But do you have the same devotion to your brothers and sisters in Christ? You see, you cannot separate the two types of love. Our love for God and love for the brethren. They're inseparable. This is what Paul is exhorting us, encouraging us. If there's any thought, oh yeah, I just want to be alone with God and I and I don't want to be part of this mess of pain. There's a problem there. There's a problem there. It's a lack of true devotion actually.

And so we must always be reminded what is then fellowship of the brethren. It's a kind of love again that only can come from Christ himself. And this verse speaks of this unique spiritual family in which Christ's love is from the head to the body. You see this the anatomy of Christ's church. He wants to pour his lavish love, his beautiful love towards us. But what of our body is stopping that from going through all the parts of the body?

And so we got to constantly think about not only ourselves but how all of us affect each other because we are. And so this constant awareness of how we are either showing love or not showing Christ's love because in the world true devotion is scarce is it not? You don't see love on a daily basis. It's a very rare thing if you even see any love at work.

But this is the heartbeat of Christ's church. Every time we gather this is key. And so Paul's saying, he's exhorting, be encouraged. When you love, you're going to experience Christ's love flowing out of you. And then the world go, this can't come from anywhere else except Christ. It cannot be explained. That's the point. They're supposed to think about Christ, not about you and your flattery words that are dissimulated, not without hypocrisy, but genuine wholehearted devotion to one another.

And Christ shows up. He promised this. He says he will show up as I have loved you. That's the promise. As I have loved you.

So the distinctive of Christian love is all true and all pure love is manifest by then continuing on notice in honor preferring one another. In honor preferring one another. The sense that Apostle Paul is encouraging is don't be

the first one that says, "I'm gonna do all the work or I want to receive all the honor. I want to receive as much honor in this church. I want to do everything." That's not a Christian. Not one that is displaying Christian love.

It's preferring others to receive honor. Look at the paradox. The world wants to chase for more and more honor, more status, more reputation, right? More influence, but that is not a believers. Jesus said that the one that is a servant shall be the one that is first in heaven, not the other way around.

You see, every moment that we have as a Christian, it's a paradox to the world. It cannot be explained by worldly feelings, worldly intellect or wisdom. They can only be pointing back to Christ. This is Christ. You see, this is how we can prefer one to another in honor. We don't want VIP treatment. The world may want the VIP treatment. We don't. Amen. We rather seat at the back of the seat and not at the front as James says with favoritism. Favoritism should not be in any of us. We should treat everyone with honor. Preferring one another in honor. So recognition is not a big thing. It's not a big deal for us as Christians. Doesn't that kind of help? Like we don't have to tip-toe into this room and everyone's watching and everyone's who's going to who's going to receive preferential treatment here. No, take all of that out. That's the world.

We prefer Christ. We prefer honoring one another like he honored others.

Think about it. Jesus stooped low and washed his disciples feet. That was a servant's task. He did that to show us humble service. This is humble service. We prefer honor to others. We are sharing Christ's love, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me conclude with these words. Look at what God is calling us just right now. And our first week of understanding the anatomy of Christ's Church. You see, as a world around us grows colder and more artificial and more fragmented, the church must become remarkably beautiful in its self-sacrificial love. Not with fallen human weakness, not depending on our strength or our strategies, but with the redeemed spirit empowered life that Christ gives to us. He wants to do a redeeming work in and through your life. What a wonderful thing that we have the opportunity to display in our local church.

You see, when Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." He gave the world an unapologetic that cannot be refuted. You don't have to say much. You just

need to display this kind of love and people will know. People will know.

And he gave us this commandment to not live inconsistently but to live consistently. And that word is faithful. We are to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ in this because he was faithful to the disciples. He was faithful to our forefathers in the faith. And he is faithful to you right now. That same love that he shared in that upper room. Think about it. That same love that he shared with the disciples, he is showing that to us right now. That's what he's doing. People may reject or mock or dismiss the genuine love that we display and the way that we honor by preferring one another and the way we lay down our lives for one another. They might still dismiss it.

But here's the thing. We're not depending upon them. We are only thinking about one person at that moment and that is I am doing what Christ called me to do. That's the key. You're doing what Christ has called you to do in this local church. Again, it's not difficult. He made it all possible by him modeling it out in his earthly ministry and then dying on the cross to pay for the sin of our disobedience so that we can become obedient just like Christ because he gives up his spirit not perfectly but we can do it faithfully. Amen.

So let us recognize at this stage at this point we cannot fulfill this high calling in our own fleshly strength. I think we all agree to that. And so I am calling our entire church family to a week of prayer and fasting beginning tomorrow morning to the 13th of Friday. That we are setting aside these days for two central purposes for us as believers in Christ that God would break through our self-regard and grant us spiritual power to embody these one anothers and these truths would become more and more part of our daily lives.

And then for the unbelievers there are amongst us that as we live out this radical self-sacrificial love those who do not yet know Christ as their personal savior and lord that they will behold the kind of fellowship of the brethren and see clearly the unmistakable marks of a true Christian. So they will be not confused. They would know this is of Christ and they would want his love personally for themselves.

So don't let this sermon remain a concept that you just think about. Again, it's must be through actions. But we must heed prayer. We must heed fasting at times. I believe these one anothers require fasting because we depend too much on our flesh. And I want you to recognize that.

And so I want you to do this as we're going through our praying fasting week. You'll see that each day I set a devotional to meditate on each one is different.

And I want you to take those things and pray those for yourself. Fast according to the guidelines that I said on the first page that you would do it with discernment. Based on your physical condition. I laid it all out there that there are different kinds of ways to fast. One of them is fasting from the digital gadgets that are not work-related. But the other kinds of distractions that you are normally attuned to but every time you fast that hunger is a moment to pray. Every time you feel that hunger, pray. Pray and pray and pray and see how God is the one that shapes you, not the other way around. You're not trying to earn favor here. Just like we didn't earn favor upon our salvation. No. And we're not to continue to earn favor. No. We're continue to yield to his grace. He wants to provide you, the local church, more and more of his grace, more of experience of his love.

Will we yield to him? Will we yield to him more and more? Don't give into your flesh this week. Give in to prayer. He wants you to pray to him. He'll provide. He'll provide.

And so, here's one thing I want you to think about. Think of one specific person in our local church that you can show this kind of intentional love this week. Let's put the rubber meeting the road as a prayer. Let's make our actions speak louder than words. Ask God to show you who that person is and then go and find that person out and trust that Christ will show up because he does. He always does because he is the one that does not change. His love never changes. And so ask God for wisdom on how to do that. And I will be in prayer for you as well. I will be part of the prayer and fasting this week. So I want this to be our church family experiencing greater breakthroughs, greater experiences of Christ's love, greater experiences of love one another as Christ loved us.

Would you join me then this week in prayer and fasting? Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, it is such delight again to receive the words of Christ. Kind of words he said to his disciples in that upper room. He continues to share these words to us here at Calvary Road.

And so I do ask and pray that you would help my brothers and sisters in Christ be able to go through this week praying and fasting that they would do so that they would be better Christians in sharing your love in Christ's love. And that I pray that the gaps, the tensions, the fragmentation of Christ's body would dissipate.

And I pray that if every person would be connected by the love of Christ within this church body, I pray that you would protect them from any fleshly comfort and staying the same or any attacks that our enemy would impose upon us. As reminded of the psalmist that with greater understanding, yes, we will be attacked more harshly, but it is so worth it. It's so worth it because we want to please you and honor you more with our lives. And we know we're not doing this to receive or earn your favor, your grace. It is rather you want to pour out your grace to us. You want us, you want to pour out more of your love towards your people.

And so I pray, Father, that the windows of heaven will be wide open this week. And there will be refreshing showers of your grace, your mercy, and yes, your love. And that we would be then living out more of Christ's love in our lives and within this church body. Thank you, Father, for this time of hearing of your word. I pray now that you would help us to be doers of your word. And we'll thank you in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.