Everyone Will Know — Delivery Transcript

John 13:34–35 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, October 23, 2022 · *Family Matters*

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If you're new to our church, we typically preach through books of the Bible. We had been preaching through the book of Revelation, and we pressed pause on that to do a series on our church, a series on the local church, and what does it look like to be a local church and what's God's design for the local church. And I'm going to try to wrap it up this morning with a final sermon on what it looks like when a healthy church and a healthy structure are hitting on all cylinders. What is the distinguishing mark that shows everyone that they truly belong to Jesus and that Jesus is amongst them, that Jesus is doing something special in their life.

And oddly enough, the things that we've looked at about healthy church governance and a church that preaches the Bible and a church that's filled with the Holy Spirit, all of those things are important things. They are given by Christ because without them we cannot function as a church. But that's not the distinguishing mark. The distinguishing mark isn't when people come into our church and people have their hands raised in worship and they're singing loudly. It's not any of those things. The thing that marks a local church that shows the world that they truly belong to Jesus is a four-letter word, and it's the word love.

And if you hear those words and kind of roll your eyes and go, there's Wes being a hippie or whatever— trust me, I'm no hippie. Secondly, the fact that you would even think that is a symptom of being in a culture that has warped the very idea of what love even is and what it means to love people with a Christ-like, Godlike love. And so we need to renew our minds this morning and understand, because Jesus says in John chapter 13, verses 34 to 35, this is the mark. This is how the world will know.

And so Jesus cannot be wrong, and Jesus is not a hippie, contrary to popular belief amongst some. So if that's what he says marks his church above anything else, and we want to be a

church that is marked as belonging to Jesus, then we need to know how to love one another with a Christ-like love so that the world can know we belong to Jesus. And so if you're taking notes, love is the essential ethic. John 13 verse 34 spells it out. This is Jesus speaking with his disciples. He's just had dinner with them.

He's about to go to the cross. Judas has already left to go and betray Jesus. And he's speaking with his inner circle, those who truly belong to him, and he says to them, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This is a simple and short verse. It's a verse that we have put in our vision frame as a local church. We want to abide in the word.

We want to love one another and we want to bear much fruit. Last week Taylor preached a message on John 15 that powerfully kind of summarized a personal spirituality and the spirituality of a local church. This puts legs on that vision of spirituality with the way that we love one another with a Christ-like love. It is the most countercultural, supernatural, barrier-breaking action that any of us could ever do. You've probably heard the song. I can't remember who sings it. The song that gets stuck in your head. It's been stuck in my head all week.

So I'm about to put it in your head as well. You ready? Now put your hands in your ears. "Love, sweet love." You guys remember this song? Do you remember the rest, how it goes? "It's the only thing that there's just too little of." It's a very pretty song. I don't think that love, sweet love is the thing there's too little of. I think the thing there's probably too little of is this love that Jesus is talking about. It's the Greek word agape; some think of it as a Godlike love.

And Jesus says this love is a new commandment. And I found that interesting because if you know your Old Testament, you know the command to love one another is not a new thing. You go all the way back to the book of Leviticus, which kind of lays out the law of the land for the people of God. In Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18, the Lord says to his covenant people Israel, "Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."

That verse in Leviticus is the same verse that Jesus quotes when he's being quizzed by the religious leaders about what is the greatest commandment. They're trying to catch Jesus, to kind of catch him in a gotcha question so they could justify crucifying him. And he quotes the greatest commandment, and he quotes the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4–5,[1] you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. But then he follows it with this second commandment from Leviticus. He says, "The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

And so there's nothing new about the command to love one another in general. What's new about this new commandment that Jesus adds is that phrase, as I have loved. You may think of it this way. What's new about the new commandment is the same thing that's new about the new covenant. And the newness of the new covenant is that Jesus inaugurated something with his life, death, and resurrection and that new covenant changes the way that we, number one, define what love is and, number two, how that love is given, why that love is given.

And you can see that just from the context, if you look at what Jesus does right before this command to his disciples to love one another— if you move up just a few verses, one of the most shocking things Jesus did throughout any of his ministry was during that dinner time with his disciples, right before he's about to go to the cross. Even though he is the most powerful man in the room, he's God in the flesh, he's the Messiah, he deserves to be served, but instead of demanding his rights and using his power, he gets up from the table, he wraps a towel around his waist, he takes off his outer garments, he gets down on his hands and knees, and he begins to wash his disciples' feet.

It made them uncomfortable. In fact, it made Peter so uncomfortable he says, no, no, no, Lord, don't touch my feet. I should be washing your feet. And Jesus says, if I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me. And so Jesus is here demonstrating love. And you know that because right before he does this, it says that he had loved his own to the end, that he had given them the greatest, purest form of love, and then as the capstone of that love, he gets up and he washes his disciples' feet.

So what this shows is the new covenant, what's new about the new covenant is this love is given even when it's undeserved. That this type of love is not a need-based love. It's not a love that's reciprocal. If you love me, I love you. This is a unique love that is a servant of the will, not a victim of the emotions. It's a love that's granted to the other person, whether they're deserving of it or not. It's a love that flows from your character, not from anything about their virtue or deservingness of it.

And that's the kind of love that Jesus gave to his disciples, and he patterns what that love is to look like and it changed their life forever. And then the second thing about the new covenant that I see, if you follow on in John's gospel right after he washes their feet, of course he gives his Olivet discourse,[2] he goes to the Garden of Gethsemane and gets arrested, he gets flogged, he gets beaten, he is unjustly tried and crucified, beaten to within an inch of his life. He's hanging there on the cross, and even on the cross, Jesus, looking at his executioners who were crucifying a sinless man who'd done no wrong, even in that moment, he looks at them and says, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Love granted, even though it's undeserved. And in that moment, Jesus— we know, just like we're going to take the Lord's Supper in just a few moments— that his suffering was not his

suffering. It was rather our suffering. The sin that he was atoning for was not his sin, it was actually our sin for which he was atoning, and that shedding of blood to wash away sin was not to wash away the sins of his own life, but it was instead to wash away our sins, that on the cross Jesus stood in our place for our sin.

And unlike the blood of bulls and goats in the Old Testament that were sacrificed in order to kind of postpone God's judgment, through the death of Jesus, when he became our atoning sacrifice, his death was once and for all past sin, present sin, future sin. All sin completely atoned for. And so when we are called to love other people and when we're called to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we're not told to do that so that we can get God's love. Rather, God's love has already been given.

It's already been displayed through the death of Jesus on the cross. And so that changed the reason why we love. It gives us a new power for loving people even when we don't want to love them. Even when people are kind of snooty and just kind of annoying and we don't really care to give them what Jesus is calling us to give them. We grant that love anyway because that's what Jesus gave to us, even when we were undeserving, even when we were a little self-righteous and snooty or whatever the case may be.

Even though we were undeserving, Jesus loved us, and that fact gives us a new power and motivation for loving other people. That's what's new about this new commandment. It's new because Jesus is the pattern of this kind of love. He uniquely demonstrated, unlike any other person who's ever lived, what love looks like, but he's also the source of its power. He's the pattern and the power. He's the source from which our love flows. Even when I don't feel like giving love, I find an ability because of what Jesus has given to me, and he's also the standard against which true love is measured.

And you want to know whether you're really loving your spouse the way Christ loved you, or really loving your spouse the way you should, or really loving your children the way you should, or loving other people in the church the way we should. All you got to do is look back to Jesus and look at the way in which he loved his disciples. That's the pattern, the standard against which we're to measure our love for one another. A new power, a new pattern, a new reason, a new rule or standard against which to measure.

And if you think about it, are you not thankful that Jesus loved you when you were not very lovely? When's the last time you actually considered the fact that Jesus is always willing to listen to you, even though you're not always willing to talk to him? When's the last time you really meditated on the fact that he is always faithful? Great is your faithfulness to me. Even though many times we are faithless and undeserving, even though we're weak and frail and fall short, Jesus is consistently there to love us, to save us, and deliver us.

And that creates within you a new impetus for loving people. Just like that old hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." He's looking at the cross and he says, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." Our love is not given because of some duty-bound fear. Our love is given because of a joyfully motivated gratitude. That's what's new about the new covenant. Jesus is both the source and the standard. The source from which true love flows and the standard against which true love is measured. Now with that in view, that's what's new about the new love and the new commandment.

What is the love? Because what Jesus means by love and oftentimes what our culture means by love are not always the same thing. And in our culture in particular, in the English language anyway, We use the word love to talk about a whole lot of different things. We say things like I love Taco Bell. Or no, no, no, it's "Yo quiero Taco Bell." Wait, how does it go? That's a rabbit trail. We love Taco Bell. And we love our children. And by that you don't mean the same thing, right? You don't love your children.

I mean you don't love Taco Bell to the same degree that you love your children, at least hopefully not. If you do, we need to have a conversation. What does real love look like? The Greeks actually had four words for love. Maybe some of you have heard this before. C. S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Four Loves*. It's a really great book. I would commend it to you. But he identifies how love has different manifestations. And in the Greek, Koine Greek, there was storge love. I always remember storge because the stork, the stork brings the new baby to your family.

That's not how it really works, but that's how I got told before I had the talk. The stork brings the family. That's family like love, storge. It's not just family either, it's familiarity. It's love that flows from a place of familiarity. So you might love your church because the church is familiar to you. It's where I grew up. You may love your alma mater, the Aggies, or the Red Raiders, or whatever the case may be in your case, because it's familiar. You grew up in it. There's a second kind of love called phileo.

It's where we get our word Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. Storge is love that's from familiarity; phileo is more love from friendship. You don't get to choose your family, but you do get to choose your friends, right? That's phileo love. It's kind of a selective love in a way. It's a companionship, intimacy. It's that closeness, that bond, it's that side-to-side love. And then you have on top of phileo love, eros, which is where we get our word erotic; it's love that flows from desire. This is the love that is face-to-face, this is the love that is sexual love.

It's not only sexual love, but it's at least sexual love. It is a love that is passionate, that is selective. I want you and no others. That's eros love. And a lot of times eros love manifests itself in a need-based love. I need you, I want you, a desirous kind of love. And then there is this fourth word for love, which is the word agape. And C. S. Lewis even says that in that

culture in the first century, the Christians really took this word and infused it with new meaning and significance.

And the idea is that this love is a love that flows from God himself. And that makes this kind of love unique because God is not someone who needs anything. He does not desire us because he needs us. But he still has a desire to love us. He loves us not because he needs us, but he loves us because he sees in us his image. We're all created in the image of God, and when we are submitted to God's design and we are flourishing as we are meant to originally be created, we reflect God and display God, and that delights the Lord because he is the epitome of all truth and goodness and beauty.

Usually when someone loves themselves, you say that guy loves himself too much. We shouldn't love ourselves too much. If you have a sinful person who has too much love for himself, he's usually blind to his own imperfections and whatnot. But with the Lord, he cannot love himself too much because he is the epitome. He's the standard of goodness. He's the standard of beauty. Truth, goodness, beauty, all of that is originating in God. And so God loves himself because he is the end of all that we love. If we love beauty and truth and goodness, and all of those things are essentially found in God alone, that's the ultimate expression of them, then of course God would love himself.

And God's love for us is to help bring about truth and goodness and beauty to its completion in our lives so that we can be more like God. So God loves us because we have his image, but in his loving us, he transforms us more and more into his image. We recover and pursue his original design, and that love completes itself in that action. That's agape love. It's a love that begins and ends in God. It's a love that flows from his goodness and perfection and aims to bring that same goodness and perfection into the life of its object, into the life of the beloved.

And this is the love that Jesus showed throughout the Gospels. This is the love that moved Jesus to do the things that he did. John 3:16: God so what? He "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son," that whoever would believe in him wouldn't perish, but rather have everlasting life. So even in that verse, you see the boomerang, God, who is love, displayed his love by giving his son to the world, and as he gives his love to the world, those who believe— what happens to them?

They don't perish, but they have everlasting life. So that love begins to perfect them and heal them and give them a new kind of life that originates in God himself. That's the love of God. That's a God-based, self-giving, Godlike love. That is the love that moved God to send Jesus into the world. It's the love that moved Jesus to take a loaf of bread and a couple of fish and feed four thousand people. It was compassion, his love for people that moved that. It was love in Mark 1:41 that moved Jesus to say to the man with leprosy, who was an outcast, who was marginalized by society— he looked at that man and said, I'm willing to touch you.

I'm willing to love you. And so he touched him, and the man with leprosy was healed. You didn't touch people with leprosy back then. They were untouchable, yet Jesus touched the untouchable. He took a woman who had a problem with blood. She was bleeding for twelve years, irregular kind of menstrual cycle. She was outcast, untouchable. We don't want to mess with that. And yet she touched the hem of Jesus' garment. And it healed her immediately, and he identified with her in her brokenness. It was compassion and love that moved him to do that.

It was love that took Jesus, when he met blind Bartimaeus, the blind beggars on the road—moved with compassion, the text says. He touched their eyes and immediately they could see and they followed him. He's showing that love because he recognizes even though no one else is going to recognize it, I recognize the goodness of God in you. I recognize the image of God in you, and I'm going to give you love, even though you're not deserving of it, so that I can begin to heal you and complete you and bring you back to who you were originally meant to be.

This is the same love that in Luke 7[3] moved Jesus to say to a grieving mother who had just lost her one and only son, do not grieve, mother. And then he goes to the pallbearers, touched the coffin, and says, Young man, I tell you, get up, and he gets up. He was moved with compassion. There's something moving Jesus to not just do these miracles, but do certain miracles for a certain reason to show that these people who you don't value are valued by God, and these people who you think are unhealable and unsavable, I can indeed save.

And he saved those people through a demonstration of his great love. He says the same thing to Lazarus, says the same thing to Jairus's daughter. It was the love of Jesus that moved him to associate with the marginalized, open blind eyes, cleanse the lepers' wounds, heal the sick, and raise the dead. It was that same love that moved Jesus to be whipped and beaten into a bloody pulp have nails driven through his hands and his feet, have thorns placed on his head, and say to his very executioners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

That's the love the world needs now. Not love, sweet love, but that kind of love that originates in God, and when it is given to another person, it revolutionizes their life. It begins to heal them and change them in ways that they didn't even know they could be healed or changed. That's the kind of love that Jesus says, I've given to you and that's the kind of love I want you as my church to give to one another. And if you will love one another in that way, you'll change the world.

Not only will you change your church, not only will the individuals within your church have their lives revolutionized and changed, but you will change the world. But here's what we need to know. If we love people in that way, the love that Jesus loved us with, that love is

uniquely attractive. But it's also simultaneously uniquely repulsive. It attracts and repels at the same time. Why? Because that love, unique, agape love, uniquely, begins and ends in God himself. And so there is a sense in which all of us are attracted to God because God is the source of truth and goodness and beauty and we all love beauty.

We all love goodness and we're drawn to it. And so we're drawn to God as a result. We want God. We yearn for God because we yearn for truth and goodness and beauty. But as we're drawn to God and his love, here's what happens. His truth begins to shine a light on our lies and deception. His goodness begins to shine a light on our sin and wickedness. His beauty begins to expose just how ugly our hearts have become. And when that happens in our life, we go, no thanks. Peter says, Lord, depart from me.

I'm not worthy. Isaiah says, Woe is me, I'm undone. And this is exactly what happens to people. When they get close to God and God gets close to them, as soon as he begins to show who he really is, people push back and distance themselves and say that's too much for me. But that's the nature of God's love. He cannot help it. He's the epitome of truth, goodness, and beauty. He wants to develop that and cultivate that in our own lives, but in order for him to do that, we've got to draw near.

But when we draw near, it exposes those things. And so we've got to both not only be drawn to his love, but to receive that love even when it's painful, even when it's uncomfortable, and unleash that love in the context of a local church, even though some people will be attracted and other people will be repulsed and rebel against it. This definition for love, I think, captures those two ideas. If I was going to define love, I would say love, agape love is a desire for and cultivation of holy goodness in the life of the beloved.

So if you're a Christian and you're married, this is the kind of love you should have for your spouse. In Christian homes, the kind of love you should have for your children. And in the church, this is the kind of love Christians should have for one another. Notice this love is not wishy-washy sentimentality. This love is not I accept you as you are no matter what. This love is not so tolerant that it tolerates evil. This love is a love that desires goodness. It celebrates goodness in the life of the beloved.

So when there's a virtue, when there's God-like virtue in the life of that beloved, you celebrate it, you praise it, you desire it, but at the same time love also moves you as a Christian to cultivate that same goodness in the life of the beloved. And so as a mom or a dad, it's your love that compels you to discipline your children when they're sinning because you want to cultivate holy goodness in their life. It's your love for your spouse that says, I love you, but this attitude, this behavior in your life grieves God, it grieves the Holy Spirit; you are better than this; this is not who God's called you to be.

And so I want to challenge you. I want to confront you in this behavior, not because I hate you, but because I love you. And I want to see you grow. That's what it looks like in the church. In the church, you're sitting in these small groups and you confess your weakness, you confess the sin in your life, and you do so knowing that because those other people love you, they're going to say to you, you're better than this. You can overcome this addiction. You can overcome these weaknesses in your life, and we're going to help encourage you and strengthen you to do those things.

Not because we're holier-than-thou, not because we're hoity-toity self-righteous Christians, but because we love you. And love always cultivates holy goodness in the life of the beloved. That's what God's love always does. Why? Because God's love begins in himself and ends in himself. And so when it is unleashed in the world, it's always drawing people back to God and cultivating his goodness and truth and beauty in them so that they begin to display his truth and goodness and beauty to the rest of the world. And that's why Jesus tells his church, do that.

Love one another in that way, and you'll show the world you belong to me. But in the process, it's going to be attractive to some and repulsive to others. Now, why does this matter for us? Why are we talking about love in a series on the local church? I know it sounds simplistic, but if we could just do this one thing, everything else takes care of itself. If we could just embrace God's love for us and grant that love to other brothers and sisters in our church, even when we don't feel like it, even when they're undeserving.

This community, this local church would become a very supernatural place. It would become a compelling place. People would walk into this church, and even though they, in Ruder's case, they have to say no, they have to deny their father and mother. They have to leave the comfort of family. They have to lose the prosperity that was afforded to them by their job. They're willing to make that sacrifice because when they enter into this community, it provides for them in ways those things could never do. And it protects and nurtures them in ways that those other things could never do because God's love is cultivated here.

That's what the church is meant to be. It's always what we were meant to be. Not a country club, not a social gathering for people who like a similar kind of music. But a supernatural gathering of people who've been loved by God and who sacrificially graciously give that love to others, even when they're undeserving. That would heal us and it would begin to heal the world and everyone would know that we belong to Jesus. One of my favorite passages is Galatians chapter 5, verse 6. And I want to read this and then I'm going to bring it to a conclusion.

But it just so effectively summarizes what we're supposed to do as Christians. If I had a life verse for our church, this would be it. Paul's writing to the Galatians who are kind of becoming legalistic and adding all these rules and regulations to their life together and their

Christian life. And he says, in Christ Jesus, these external metrics don't matter. Circumcision, uncircumcision, sign of the old covenant, irrelevant. The only thing that matters in the new covenant for Christ's people is faith expressing itself through love. Those four words, faith working through love, is what it means to be a local church.

We're a people of faith. We believe Jesus is Lord, he is God's appointed Messiah; he's come, he's died, he was buried, and he rose again for our salvation. That faith though is not a dead faith, it's not a stagnant faith, it's an active faith. And that faith expresses itself or it works through love. Love is not a feeling, love is an action, love is a verb. And so love in the church begins to cultivate and express itself in various types of ways. Namely, love for God expresses itself through obedience. Love for God expresses itself through worship.

Love for one another expresses itself through forgiveness, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, and love for the world expresses itself through evangelism, missions, gracious lavish generosity, whatever it takes to get the gospel to the ends of the earth, all of that is faith expressing itself through love. And that's what the local church is. Our discipleship pathway, or vision frame, I've sometimes called it. If you look at that vision frame, everything on there is motivated by love. Either love for God, love for the church, or love for the world. Our worship gatherings are where we express our love for God, worship in a gathering.

Our small groups are an environment in which love for one another can actually flourish. You can't love people in a row. You don't know their names. You don't know when they're in the hospital. You don't know what's going on in their life. But when you're in a community, face-to-face, you know their name, you know what's going on in their life, that's where love flourishes. You'll never be able to display the love of Jesus on a boat by yourself on the lake. But when you join hands with other brothers and sisters in Christ and you go knock on doors, or you go get on an airplane, and you go to the uttermost parts of the earth, then they see it.

Then they see love. That's where love manifests itself in the church. So literally everything we do in our church, this is the mark, this is the distinguishing ethic. This is the essential thing without which really we're just wasting our time and spinning our wheels. And so what do we need to do? God has given us this local church, He's given us Broadview so that we can display his love to the rest of the world, but that love's only going to be displayed if we embrace two things, and those two things are vulnerability and accountability.

We don't have time to talk about them very much, but vulnerability, it's an indispensable attribute if you're going to have love. In your marriage, you can't love your spouse if there's no vulnerability there. If you're not open with what's going on. C. S. Lewis, powerful quote: "To love at all is to be vulnerable." To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your

heart will certainly be wrung, possibly broken. The alternative, if you don't want that to happen, keep it intact. Give it to no one, not even an animal.

Wrap it around with hobbies, luxuries, routine avoidances of entanglement, and then lock it up in a casket of your own selfishness. You do that, this means in the long run, the alternative to tragedy, or at least the threat of tragedy, is damnation. Because in that casket, safe still and unventilated in the darkness, it's going to go bad. Your heart will go bad. It won't be broken, but it will go bad, become finally unbreakable, impenetrable, resistant to all good and joy. If you, in a church, refuse to be vulnerable, that's the alternative.

That's the destination of a heart that will not become vulnerable and allow itself to be loved, or to love. We've got to embrace vulnerability. And I know it's uncomfortable, but that's the calling on our lives. And then secondly, we've got to be accountable. This is why membership matters. This is why you shouldn't just attend a church. You should join a church. You shouldn't just attend every now and then. You should assimilate. You should plug in. You should get in the groups. You should serve on teams. You should put yourself in community with other people because by doing that, you make yourself accountable.

You make yourself known and you begin to know other people. Without that kind of accountable relationship, love has no enforcement mechanism. Love has no way to cultivate unless accountability is there. And so as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper, I want to encourage you, if you're a member of our church, to re-evaluate whether or not your relationship with this church is a display of the love that Jesus has called us to give to one another. If you're not a Christian, I would encourage you as we take the Lord's Supper to consider coming down to the front and publicly professing your faith in Jesus as Lord.

If you're not a member of our church and the Lord is moving in your heart to say it's not a perfect church, but it's a church in which you can grow and display my love for the world, I would encourage you to consider exploring membership and what that looks like. You can scan this QR code we'll have up on the screen to start that conversation. The altar is open if you want to make any public decision.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Deuteronomy 6.1"; the Shema ("Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength") is Deuteronomy 6:4–5. Source: Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: heard as "Olivet discourse" (audio unclear); the teaching Jesus gives after the foot washing in John is the Upper Room (Farewell) Discourse, John 14–17; the Olivet Discourse is Matthew 24–25. Left as heard. Source: John 13–17; Matthew 24:3 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "Luke 17"; the raising of the widow's son at Nain is Luke 7:11–15. Source: Luke 7:11–15 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩