

**Loving Like Jesus: Christ the Chief Elder**  
**November 11, 2018**

We continue our Stewardship emphasis this week as we consider what it means to “love like Jesus.” Remembering that all blessings flow from God to us and to the world, those blessings are best shared as we serve, love, and live like Jesus. Like the same Jesus who said: “I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.” and “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” That is what it means to love like Jesus.

And that is a tall order. When we put aside everything, everything that we think that we know, everything that we see as nonessential and even those things that we think are essential- the one thing that we are commanded to do, the one thing that we are called to be, is to love and to be loving. We are called to love like Jesus. And in those two verses from John’s gospel, Jesus tells us what it means to love like he loves.

It is loving with a love that causes us to sacrifice everything for others. It is the love of a good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. It is the greatest love, the love that calls us to lay down our lives for our friends. It is the love that we remember today as we thank those veterans who were willing to literally lay down their lives for others, who fought and died for our freedom to worship today. They loved their country more than they loved their lives and were ready to give themselves as a sacrifice for many. Can we do that? Will we do that? Will we be able to give up all that we are for our friends, for our brothers and sisters in Christ and even for those who we don’t even know, let alone love?

I'm not sure that we will be able to or willing to. We like things the way that they are. We like what we believe and we like how we live. We think that we are right- that we are doing what God calls us to do, that we are living as God calls us to live. But are we?

Perhaps Jesus thought that he was doing what God was calling him to do, perhaps he thought that he was living as God was calling him to live. But then things changed. He began to see that God was not calling him to live, but that God was calling him to die- to give his life as a ransom for many. And Jesus didn't want to do that. As he found himself in the Garden of Gethsemane, having been betrayed by one of his closest friends, he prayed "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." Jesus wanted something different to happen. He didn't want to lay down his life for his friends.

Yet he knew that God knew better. So he continued to pray "Yet not what I want but what you want." And with that, Jesus submitted himself to God, he submitted himself to the cross. And he laid down his life for his friends. He laid down his life for us. And he brought us into eternal life. Jesus calls us to to do the same.

Loving like Jesus means that we love each other so much that we are willing and ready to give up all that we are and all that we have for each other. It means that we are willing to give our very lives so that others may live. And I wonder if we can do it, I wonder if we will do it.

We are too caught up in what we want, in what we think, in what we believe, in what we need, that we can't comprehend what it means to give it all up for others. It is too much, it is too risky, it is too scary. So we don't do it. We don't pray "Not what I want but what you want." We pray "Make what I want what you want."

We stay where it is comfortable, we stay where it is easy, we stay with what we want, with what we need, with what we know. And we fail to do what God wants us to do, we fail to be who God wants us to be, we fail to see what God wants us to see. We fail to love the way that Jesus loves.

Jesus loves like the Good Shepherd that he is. He loves like the one who is willing and who does lay down his life for his friends, for those that God has given to him. When we say we love like Jesus, we are saying that we do the same. And we can do so without fear and with great confidence for we know that we are loved that way by Jesus.

Today we celebrate Jesus as the Good Shepherd of our lives and the Chief Elder of our church. As we do so we say that we are ready, willing, and able to love like he loves, we are ready, willing and able to lay down our wants, our needs, our desires, even our very lives, for our friends. And we can do so because Jesus has done the same for us. He has given his life for us and for our salvation. He died so that we might live. So let us live, not for ourselves, but for Jesus. Let us love, not as we want but as he wants. And let us give, let us give our wants, our needs, our desires, our very lives, for each other.

We come to the table today and we remember. We remember the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. We remember Jesus, whose body was broken and blood was shed, for us and for our salvation. We remember our Chief Elder, who shows us what it means to love. We come to the table where remember that we are forgiven, we are loved, we are free. And we proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes , as we serve, as we love, and as we live like Jesus. Amen.