

“...the fellowship of His sufferings.”

*John 14:12-17*

*12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13*

*"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

*15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*

*16 " [And] I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper [another Counsellor of the same kind as I am], that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*

This morning, we will wrap up the third subject in our passage: loving Christ.

**John 14:15. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments**

What is love? According to the Lord,

/Love is giving or acting sacrificially on behalf or for the benefit of the one loved.\

God set the precedent for love by loving the world, even though the world was and is in rebellion against Him. He loved by giving the world the greatest gift possible.

*John 3:16*

*16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Jesus will put it this way in chapter 15:

*John 15:13-14*

*13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

Love is giving or acting sacrificially on behalf or for the benefit of the one loved.

/The essential thing about love is taking action on behalf of the one you love.\

/And when it comes to loving Jesus, taking action means obeying His commands.\

We love Christ when we obey His commands. However...our flesh is not at all interested in obeying His commands. So how can we even begin to love Him?

There must be a love which comes before our love for Christ.

/If we are going to love, we must first be loved. \

*1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.*

We love, because He – God the Father and God the Son - first loved us.

God's love comes first. He loved us before we were born. He loved us when we were His enemies. God is love. He is the source of love. His love for us came first.

## **John 14:15. If you love Me, you will keep My commandments**

This begs the question: What commandments?

There are of course many, but here in the gospel of John (as well as in John's letters and indeed in Paul's letters as well), one stands out as the foremost.

*John 15:12-17*

*12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

*13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14*

*"You are My friends if you do what I command you. ....*

*17 "This I command you, that you love one another.*

NASU

/Love one another.\ There's no doubt about it: this is the commandment Jesus emphasized with His disciples that evening in the Upper Room.

Look at how John puts this in 1 John 3:

*1 John 3:16*

*16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

/Pic\He loved us first. He showed that love by the cross. When we come to know His love, we come to love Him. When we love Him, we obey Him. We lay down our loves for the brethren. /And that completes the circuit of His love.\

There is one more thing we need to address this morning: the problem of suffering. Some of you are suffering right now.

/You can attest that suffering is a real problem.\

One of the most difficult questions I get is this: how can God make my suffering go away? /What scriptures will give me relief from this suffering?\

/Sometimes, the suffering is in the form of physical pain.\

/ Other times it is mental anguish. Grief. Sadness. The pain of loss. \

/When Jesus tells us to love one another as He has loved us, well, this is a love that suffers. \ Suffering is part of real love. If you want to avoid suffering, just don't love anybody. But that's no life. A rock feels no pain – but it's a rock. To love is to suffer.

/To love is also to have fellowship with the suffering of others.\

*Rom 12:15*

*15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

/There is also aching that is spiritual in origin.\

*Phil 1:29*

*29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

There's anguish associated with coming to know Christ.

/We will suffer loss for the sake of Christ.\

*Phil 3:7-11*

*7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

We are being conformed to His death.

/It is true that we died with Christ. We have been crucified with Christ.\

*Gal 2:20*

*20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

NASU

We have been crucified to the flesh, and to the world. These things are facts. They have already happened. /You and I have already been crucified with Christ. \

Nevertheless, the reality of our death with Christ plays out across our lives. /This crucifixion is part of God's design for conforming us to the likeness of His Son.\

/Christ suffered greatly. He suffered in His love for others.\ He suffered to the point of tears, the same tears we cry when the pain is too intense.

/When we are in great pain, the pain He suffered forms a bond with our pain.\ This is the fellowship of His suffering. He meets us in our agony and we can be comforted when we know He experienced the same agony we are going through.

He experienced all our griefs. He drank the cup of suffering to the dregs.

At times He was troubled in spirit. Human suffering caused Him inner turmoil.

/When those He loved suffered greatly, He was in inner turmoil.\



*John 11:33-36*

*33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, 34 and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"*

/The anticipation of His own suffering also caused inner turmoil for Him.\

*John 12:27*

*27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.*

When we are in the throes of pain, the pain of loss, pain too deep for us to handle, too powerful to absorb, the waves hitting us with such force as to make us lose our footing and plummet into the depths of dark despair and fear....

/He is with us. This place of suffering is familiar to Him.\

If we make our bed in hell, He stays there with us. He does not forsake us.  
/When we are in the hell of suffering, of anguish, we will not be alone.\  
/He will meet us there.\

*Ps 139:8-12*

*8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.  
9 If I take the wings of the dawn,  
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,  
10 Even there Your hand will lead me,  
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.  
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,  
And the light around me will be night,"  
12 Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
And the night is as bright as the day.  
Darkness and light are alike to You.*

He is right there with us in that place, and whether we can accept it or not, we have the one person in the universe who can legitimately say that He knows exactly what we are going through. His pain was deep, deeper than anything we can imagine.

/He was tempted in all the ways that we are being tempted, none more difficult than the temptations that accompany suffering.\ And while He never gave into temptation, as we do, He nevertheless is right there with us, because /our sins are not unfamiliar to Him either. He bore every one of them in His body on the cross.\

He is not ashamed of calling us His brothers and sisters.

/There is NOTHING that we will ever go through; no failure, no fear, no shame, no agony, no darkness, no inner torment – that He has not experienced.\

He comes to us in all these things.

He comes with mercy, and that mercy is greater than our need.

He comes with compassion, the compassion of a fellow traveller in that suffering.

He comes with love, and His love is unconquerable.

*Rom 8:35-39*

*35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written,*

*"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;  
WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."*

*37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

NASU

I take you to this passage a lot. Many of you can recite it by heart. There is a good reason for this : Romans 8:35-39 penetrates the hardest things about being a Christian. It gets through to us when nothing else can. So does the cross.

God is love. God loves you like crazy. He demonstrated that love at the cross. And Jesus loves me – this I know. ‘cause the Bible tells me so.

<><><><><><><>