

Valentine's Day has come and gone, leaving in its wake heart-shaped boxes of chocolates, flowers, and – of course – love songs. This past week, we were bombarded with messages about love. But let's be honest: how many of those messages truly captured the depth of love, the kind of love that Jesus calls us to in John 13:34? "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Jesus' love, the true love he calls us to embody, isn't just a fleeting feeling; it's a way of being. It's not about romantic attraction or personal fulfillment; it's about mirroring the selfless love of Christ Himself. This morning, we will build upon John 13:34 and explore what it truly means to love as Jesus loved, moving beyond the often superficial portrayals of true love in our culture and discovering the transformative power of Christ-centered love. We'll see that Jesus' love isn't just a sentiment; it's a verb. It's something we do.

1. Love Speaks the Truth:
 - a. True love isn't always sweet sentiments; sometimes, it's the hard truth.
 - b. Jesus told the Rich Young Ruler the hard truth of salvation. | Mrk 10:17-22
 - c. Paul told the Corinthians the hard truth regarding their sins. | 2 Cor 11:10-11
2. Love Humbly Receives Love:
 - a. True love receives love as graciously as it gives love.
 - b. Jesus graciously received the loving service of Mary and Martha. | Jhn 11:5; 12:2-3
 - c. Paul received Phillip's support for their sake, not his. | Php 4:10-20
3. Love Is More Than Words:
 - a. True love demands action, not just feelings.
 - b. Jesus, with tears, shared the grief of Mary and Martha. | Jhn 11:3, 5, 17-44
 - c. John exhorts us to express love with action, not only with words. | 1 Jhn 3:16-18
4. Love Offers Second Chances:
 - a. True love is often most evident in its willingness to forgive and restore.
 - b. Jesus didn't hold Peter's failures against him but forgave and restored. | Jhn 13:36-38; 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-19
 - c. Paul urged the Corinthians to lovingly forgive and restore an erring brother. | 2 Cor 2:5-11
5. Love is Selfless:
 - a. True love is selfless; it's prioritizing the needs and interests of others above our own.
 - b. Jesus modeled this love for us in His incarnation and the cross. | Php 2:3-8
 - c. Like Jesus' love, true love is not self-seeking; it's self-giving. | 1 Jhn 4:7-21

Think about the messages our culture sends us about love. The truth is that much of what our world calls "love" is a pale imitation of the real thing. It's a shadow of the boundless, sacrificial love Jesus demonstrated on the cross. And that's why it's crucial for us, as followers of Christ, to look to him as our example. Don't settle for a shallow version of love. Don't be content with just feeling love. Instead, let Jesus' example of true love transform you from the inside out. Let it motivate you to speak the truth with grace, receive love with humility, express empathy, offer forgiveness and restoration, and put others first, even when it's difficult. Let the world see the love of Jesus reflected in us because that is the kind of love that truly changes the world and lasts for an eternity.