

# **“God’s Love Revolutionizes”**

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Providence Kemptown UMC  
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The gospel lesson is from John, chapter 17, verses 20 through 26. This passage takes place following the Last Supper. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He’s praying to his Father for his followers and those to whom they will bring to Christ . . . . . “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

“Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name

known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”” This is God’s word for God’s people.

Let us pray. Holy God who is *one* and is the perfect example of family unity, touch our mind and heart today. Grant us understanding that rises above our differences and disagreements. Pour your love into each and every heart. Tear down barriers between one another in families, and help us to accept each other. Stretch us to embrace that agape love that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit. Amen. Peace be with you!

In the passage Jesus prays for the unity of his followers; past, present, and future believers. We and our children’s children are the focus of his praying. The love that the Father and Son have for each other is the kind of love we’re to reflect with each other and our families of origin.

When Jesus walked the earth he had a presence of love that was unmatched by any. When he ascended into heaven he sent the Holy Spirit to us promising to always be with us. He promised to send another person, like himself, called the Comforter—The Holy Spirit.

Jesus told them he would be leaving, and surely they felt a terrible loss as they looked up to heaven and saw him leaving them. After all, for the last three years they had experienced an intimate oneness, but now he was leaving. Things would change-they’d change for the good-because that’s all that God does is good.

Most of us here today have felt the experience of losing someone dear to us. Maybe a child or parent? Women here have gone through still birth experiences, empty nest syndrome, children that abandon their parents, and anything that would prohibit the ability to have children. We feel great loss, but we also trust that God is taking care of who we've lost. In the face of our grief and loss, we know that God's love is forever with us, and eventually as time passes, life gets easier.

The love within the divine relationship between Father and Son is a love that lives forever, and this is the kind of love that witnesses to the world that we are God's children. It's a sign of the church's oneness. And the love that mothers have for their children, even though it is human, points us to the love God has for his Son, and the love the Son has for his children.

Jesus' death on a cross was a self-giving act that can't be matched by any but a mother's love for her child; for it's a oneness that began before the child was even conceived. Listen to the language that Jesus uses in his prayer, "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us . . ." and "I in them and you in me that they may become completely one."

Our love, be it the family in a church or our family of origin, this love comes from the love with which [the Father] has loved the Son. Jesus prays to the Father that he may be in us, and that we may be in him. Isn't this love language of God so passionate and powerful?

The love that a woman has for children who aren't biologically her own, or a parent or grandparent has for their child is the kind of agape love relationship we're to have for each other, and it's by this that everyone knows that [we are] Jesus' ". . . disciples, if [we] have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

But what does this kind of love for a human look like and how deep can the caring be? I don't know, but I do know that God's love is the highest love and this is what God has poured into our hearts.

When someone commits to a body of believers, there's a need to be loved. Richard Rohr has said that ". . . the hunger of the human heart that God put in us is not just for casual and recreational relationships. We long for relationships of meaning. We long to be connected, for healing, for vocation, and for mission."

And when we do experience this kind of agape love, it's life changing, it's heart shaping, and it's presence is so powerful that over time the person who is not accustomed to being loved softens and their countenance actually changes. This is love they're not been accustomed to feeling and it revolutionizes their entire being.

Jesus says to love one another as I have loved you. Love someone who has hurt you, who repeats your words with their own slant, who points out the wrong rather than the right. Jesus calls us to love as God the Father loves us. Here's three places to start.

Let's strive to see the good in each other and to hear the good. To let go of the wrong that may have been done. Let's find common ground, and realize that our sin is what we all have in common. So let's strive to release and let go of each other's imperfections and to remember the good.

Second, let's celebrate our differences in personality! This is what makes families within the body of Christ strong and diverse. The eye doesn't always see clearly, the foot doesn't always walk straight, but God calls us to love. And lastly, let's remember to pray for those who have hurt us. To pray for our family members is like pouring down grace and mercy on ourselves; it's returned back to us.

Let's pray together. God of the highest love who loves us with the love that he himself has poured into our hearts, teach us to forgive each other as you guide and provide all that we need. When we stumble and come up empty, not knowing what to do next, remind us to turn to you and realize, maybe that's exactly where you want us Lord—always turning to you.

By your love Lord, lay mountains flat, raise up valleys, and pour forth living water into dry deserts. Restore your life to families that have been torn apart by things out of our control. Look upon your servants here today God. Grant our requests. Hear our prayer, and do what needs to be done in your time and in your way. Revolutionize our hearts and minds with your powerful passionate love.

Amen.