

## Responsible Love

**Scripture:** John 12: 31-35

**Charmain Bailey May 15, 2022**

**Reflection:** Some time ago a young sailor called his parents after his release from the military service. He said he was bringing his buddy home to stay with him. “You see, Mom,” he said, “my friend is pretty badly broken up. He was severely wounded and has only one leg, one arm, and one eye.”

After a little reflection, the mother said grudgingly, “Of course, Son, I guess he can stay with us for just a little while.” Her voice, however, carried the message that they would not like to be burdened very long with such a severely handicapped fellow.

Two days later they received a telegram from the admiral’s office, saying their son had plunged to his death from a hotel window. When his body arrived for burial, his parents saw that he had only one arm, one leg, and one eye!

The memory of her last conversation with him lingered with that mother her whole life. She often cried out, “Why didn’t I speak more carefully, more lovingly?”

If only I could take back those thoughtless words ‘he can stay with us for a just little while.....

Today we want to look at how God teaches us as Christians to love. I want to call this love “responsible love.” You can love someone responsibly or irresponsibly. The Bible teaches us to be responsible in our love to one another.

Our text for today found in John 13: 31-35 features a sense of urgency for the disciples to love one another. And it was indeed a period of urgency for Jesus, as he knew it was the last moments he would be spending with his friends. This is a contrast to our opening story, where the Mom didn’t know that she was sharing some final moments with her son, but yet again, the moments wouldn’t have been that final

if she was warmer and more caring in her response to care for someone who had lost his limbs in war.

But Jesus was making preparations to not be with his family and friends, and so he issued an urgent new charge: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Jesus is charging them with the responsibility of loving one another. And not just a casual type of approach to love, but as a profound, meaningful and significant act. Love others the way I love you. In a sacrificial way, in a responsible way.

The reason that I know that Jesus teaches us to be responsible in our love to another is this: he was responsible in his love for his people, and for all people. The Bible teaches us that the primary goal in life is to love God and love one another.

The Apostle Paul says that love is the only debt that we should owe others. He also goes to show in Romans 13:9 that the Old Testament can be summed up in our goal to love.

Paul narrows some of the Ten Commandments – the commandments dealing with others around you to a summary statement. This statement is: “Love your neighbor as yourself”.

If our primary goal in life is to love God and love one another, then there must be a proper way to love God and a proper way to love one another. These verses in Romans 13 show us the proper way to love others.

One verse says “love your neighbor.” Your neighbor is not just the person next door. Your neighbor is defined as everyone else but yourself. We should be responsible in our love toward others.

The Bible also describes how we should be responsible in our love to other people.

Romans 13:10 says that love should be a love that does no harm to others. This means that there is a wrong way to love and a right way to love others.

When how I act hurts others, then I am not loving responsibly. In essence, the Bible says that I am not really loving someone.

But when I am responsible with my love, when I do no harm to others in how I love them, then it is the right way to love. When I love in a responsible way, I am saying that I will love without doing harm.

Just as a doctor heals us by not doing harm, we love others best when we love by doing no harm to them. Now just as a doctor has ways and methods that she uses to heal you and not to harm you, you and I can love others without doing them harm. The way we do that best is by restraining our own behavior.

When I express my love to someone else, and I do it responsibly, and I do it without causing them harm, then my love stays in control. My love stays in control and it works best in others when I restrain my own behavior. I love others responsibly best when I keep my behavior from getting out of control.

In Romans 13:13 we are called to walk properly. The emphasis in our walk is to be in the day as opposed in the night. The use of the word day is used in the New Testament to describe good character. We walk in public in a way that others can see. We walk in public in a way that others will want to follow.

How should we walk? A Christian should follow Jesus like a horse follows its rider. How many of you have ever ridden a horse? If you have ever ridden a horse, you know that you ride on top of the horse on a saddle. You control the horse through the use of reins and a bridle.

The bridle is the tool that keeps the horse under the rider's control. When the rider lets the bridle loose, the horse can run faster and the horse has more freedom to move.

When the rider tightens the bridle, the rider controls the movements of the horse. The horse learns to follow the instructions of the rider by learning to control his movements.

The bridle restrains the movements of the horse. The bridle prevents the horse from getting out of control. The bridle is controlled by the rider through a pair of bridle reins. The rider holds the set of reins, which are straps of leather tied to the bridle.

When the rider has control of the reins, the horse learns to control his own movements. The bridle along with the reins teach the horse how to keep itself in control.

The rider is us when we're under the control of the Holy Spirit. The horse is the way we act. When we want to follow Jesus, who teaches us how to live, it is right that we follow Jesus' instructions.

Are there things in your lives that you think you need to get control of so that you're able to love others in a responsible way?.....Pause.....

We should NOT act irresponsibly in our love for others. We have to cast off the irresponsible attitudes that we have toward others. We have to Ask ourselves these three things: How do I act around other people I love in social settings? How do I act with other people I love when we are in private? How do I react to others I love? If our answer to any of these questions imply that we could harm someone else, then we are loving them irresponsibly. What is the benefit to you and I when we love others with a responsible love?

We will experience peace and freedom in Love. Yes...we can actually live a life full of freedom and peace when we start to love others with a responsibly.

Hear this text: Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery,"

"You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one

command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

How can you love responsibly today? Jesus says in John: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Jesus loved responsibly. He loved meaningfully and sacrificially. May our love for each other be a reflection of Jesus' love for us, Thanks be to God, Amen.

### **Prayer:**

How wondrous is your great forgiving love, mighty God!. How wondrous is your life-giving power!. With joy we revel in the glow of the sun this day, and we wonder at the life everlasting that you have opened for us in raising Jesus from the dead.

As people born of his Spirit, we are awakened to a world that is caught still in the night-shades of brokenness. And here, in the midst of all death, we long to bring life; we would see Jesus, and we would lift him up as a beacon of your love and promise to our world.

Hear our prayers for those who are suffering this day—the hungry and homeless, the sick and imprisoned, the angry, the lonely and lost. We pray that you would not let our concern pass from our hearts as these words pass from our lips, but rather that you would empower us to do your work of healing and reconciliation in their lives.

We especially lift to you this day all those who are close to our hearts, whose needs we are so often reminded of, and for ourselves in our own needs. We pray for our shutins... we pray for others who are close to our hearts..

As you made a fearful and disjointed band of disciples into your holy church, we pray that you would make us anew, that we, your body in our world, would serve you in love and hope and thankfulness all the days of our life together in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose glorious name we pray....