

Live in love

Matt 22:35-40

MPS: Christ-followers are made new by Jesus to live in God's love.

OBJ: Every person can know they are living in God's love by Three discernments.

INTRO When we hear the phrase "like a fish out of water", we typically think of something that is outside its natural or intended habitat. God created people to live in relationship with Him. People living separated from God because of sin is the most "un-human" way to live. Until God fills the human soul, it is always ruled by a ravenous, destructive, endless searching. "Made new" in Jesus Christ is the "truly human" life that God intended in creation and completed in redemption.

Last week we considered that Jesus makes people a "new creation" to live as Christ-followers. God's created design, with every uniqueness, demonstrates His intention for how He wants you to live. **Living as a Christ-follower means living our true identity in the world by God's design for the demonstration of His glory.**

TRANS Today we consider what it means to live in God's love as Worshiper and Servant.

MPS: Christ-followers are made new by Jesus to live in God's love.

*And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." **Matt 22:35-40***

This passage is known as the Great Commandment. It captures the posture between the Pharisees and Jesus. It also portrays a very accurate posture of highly religious people, too, who like to justify themselves by celebrating areas or rules they most like, while ignoring the weightier matters of the law, like loving other people. But, this passage also provides an essential understanding for true Christ-followers of God's purpose for our lives. **God designed, redeemed and commands Christ-followers to live in His love.**

TRANS Q? **What does it mean for a Christ-follower to live in love?** God's redemptive design provides the first two aspects of a Christ-follower's identity and ethos.

Jesus responds by citing God's central command of the Old Testament, and of knowing God. (Deut 6:4-5) This is not simply a "best choice" command because Jesus said it. Jesus said it because of what God meant in giving it. **God's command to love Him with the whole of our being is THE central command of all of scripture.**

Worshiper

Worshiper is the first aspect of the Christ-follower's identity because salvation is, first, reconciliation with God.

Reconciliation means a correction of relational status. [Facebook wasn't the first to record our relational status.] Christ-followers are rescued enemies who've become children and heirs to live in God's love. **Worshiper forms the first aspect of a Christ-follower's new identity in Christ, living in a right relationship with God.**

A Worshiper 'engages the heart' to focus on RELATIONSHIP with and grow an all-consuming love for God.

Engaging the heart means the entirety of life is immersed in knowing God. "Knowing God" is not mere intellectual exercise, but a relationship established in His love for and purifying our love for Him through Jesus. **Relationship with God through the gospel of Jesus Christ is not one of many, but the one that defines all others.**

A Worshiper lives to love God by faithful obedience to His commands. A Worshiper understands that relationship with God is all because of Him, who He is and what He's done. We know real love because He loved us and sent His Son to save us, to make us new. **Obedience is not obligatory adherence, but a love-compelled response to love with love.**

Worshipers love God NOT in the way 'we want to', or the way 'we think is best', but as He has clearly said He is loved, obedience to His commands. **Living in the realm of love first means loving God through obedience to His commands as a**

worshiper.

The gospel brings us into relationship with God through Jesus Christ to live in His love as **worshippers**, growing our all-consuming love for God through obedience.

TRANS But Jesus did something that was not being done, and rejected, by the religious leaders. He immediately follows the first command with another command from Leviticus 19:18, “*love thy neighbor as thyself*”. His action gives an equal accompanying weight to this command alongside the first. Jesus showed what it meant to know God’s love.

God makes it clear how to show love to Him. Love FOR God is demonstrated by two principle activities. First, trust Him to obey His commands (1 John 5:3), as Worshipers. And second, love his children (1 John 4:21). This is what Jesus told the Pharisees. John states it this way.

And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 1 John 3:23

Servant

Servant is the second aspect of the Christ-follower’s identity because God’s purpose in salvation was to demonstrate his love to others. Jesus revealed the purpose of serving when He came to show God’s love.

For the Son of Man came not to be served by to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45
God’s great love was revealed through Jesus’ life as a servant. John says that serving is the real expression of love.

“Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” 1 John 3:18

Those who have been saved by Jesus live as servants to show God’s saving love.

Servants ‘engage the hands’ to focus on EXPRESSION of new life in Jesus to show God’s love by meeting needs in His name. Engaging the hands represents the labors we do to express our strengths, skills, talents and gifts, as a practical expression of love. “Serve” holds a strong connection to love in the Bible, as an expression through acts of what is experienced in the heart. In other words, what we experience in love is best demonstrated through serving. But servant is more than only acts we do. Servant expresses the spirit of humility, like Jesus, in all that we do. In this way, through what we do and how we do, serving best shows love toward others. *Serving demonstrates love for God as we humble ourselves and place other’s first to obey Jesus’ command and model His example.*

God brought his love to earth in the form of a servant, Jesus Christ. God demonstrates his love on the earth through servants, Christ-followers. When Christ-followers live in love as God intended, we transfer the value and glory of God’s love in eternal life, as we’ve received, to all people of the world. *Living as a Servant shows love for God by serving others.*

Living in love means Christ-followers live as **Worshippers** and **Servants** of God’s love through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

TRANS Q? Why are these two aspects of our Christian identity important? And, how do they relate in the realm of love, as we live in God’s love?

ILLUS The Identity / Ethos Principle (Centripetal / Centrifugal)

- Tennis ball on string

The relationship between two forces demonstrate the relationship of living in God’s love as Worshiper and Servant.

Centripetal force is defined as, “The component of force acting on a body in curvilinear motion that is directed toward the center of curvature or axis of rotation.” **Centrifugal force** is defined as, “The apparent force, equal and opposite to the centripetal force, drawing a rotating body away from the center of rotation, cause by the inertia of the body.” Centripetal force is the primary component that draws the object toward the center. Centrifugal is a corresponding but opposite apparent force, created by the centripetal force, that draws the body away from the center.

The relationship between Centripetal force and Centrifugal force provides a helpful analogy in understanding what it means to live in God's love as Worshiper and Servant. Centripetal is an actual force. Centrifugal is an apparent force, only created when centripetal is active. Without centripetal force, there is no centrifugal force. [In the relationship of centripetal and centrifugal, one force causes two equal and simultaneous responses of drawing in to the center and moving out from center.](#)

The Principle of Identity / Ethos is simple: The One that centers your life will determine how you live your life. Living in God's love means His love draws us in to source our strength in relationship with Him (Worshiper), and sends us out supplied to serve others (Servant) with equal strength. The strength of God's love drawing us in will always create an equal and opposite strength to go love others by serving. [The power of God's love that draws you in is the same power that sends you to serve and show His love to other people.](#)

MPS: [Christ-followers are made new by Jesus to live in God's love.](#)

Living in God's love means we understand the relationship between our lives as Worshiper and Servant, how we relate to God and how we serve other people. We can't claim to love God, while we hate others. If we claim to love God, but we neglect serving others, we create a harmful disconnect in what it means to love God. My hope and prayer for this message is that you will understand God's design in redemption for you to live in His love. And, that you will make sure you are living in God's love.

OBJ: [Every person can know they are living in God's love by Three discernments.](#)

Discernment is a key word in this sermon's application. Discernment means to 'cut, distinguish, perceive'. In the Christian life, the 'cut of discernment' is a work of the Spirit's sword applying God's truth. Discernment illumines our understanding for when and how we stray from God's love in our life, bringing conviction to repent and return to God. Every one will not equally apply to every person. But, all apply to the heart's prone-nature to stray. **So, we aim to discern: [Am I living in God's love?](#)**

Discernment #1. [God's love draws us to Himself and sends us to other people.](#)

Living in the realm of love means God sources our strength to love others. We only know His strength when we spend regular time communing with Him. His Word and prayer are the primary essential for our communion, but corporate worship and fellowship also serve a vital role. When we find ourselves "running after" things in the world, we can know that we're not "living in love", but "looking for love" from the world in our activities and associations. When we find ourselves "bunkering" in the church, we can know that we are not honoring God, but using Him as an excuse to neglect other people.

ILLUS The **Parable of the good Samaritan** demonstrates that our actions reveal much to us about our thinking regarding God and ourselves. The first two that came along the road claimed to love God, but neglected to serve others. The Samaritan's actions proved that he truly loved God by serving his neighbor. (Luke 10:36-37)

When you live in the realm of God's love, your strength for serving 'sources from' to become 'an act of' worship.

Worship and communion with God bring greater insight, understanding and appreciation for serving and for other people as your heart fills with gratitude. And, serving increases our joy to strengthen relationship with God and enjoyment of others. The more we serve out of our relationship with Christ, the more that service strengthens our relationship with Him.

[Communing with God and serving faithfully as God has gifted you is vital for living in His love.](#)

Discernment #2. [My identity in Christ is revealed by how I live as a Worshiper and Servant.](#)

Relationship with God is only established by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a free gift of God that cannot be earned or achieved by any measure of good works. But serving others always demonstrates my understanding of who I am because of Jesus and the health and vitality of my relationship with God. Paul shows that good works demonstrate our identity in Christ when He writes,

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good work,
which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10*

God's created and redemptive purpose for every Christ-follower is to glorify Him through good works.

God's eternal plan for every Christ-follower is to live in His love as Worshiper and Servant. When we live in His love we experience the soul-satisfying confidence of His Will for our lives. God's will is not the "grand, Christian scavenger hunt" of life. Rather, God's will is simply walking in obedience to His commands. The glory of living in God's will is not about finding something that He's hidden from you, but learning the great joy and satisfaction of obedience to Him. **Christian, the great glory and greatest joy of life will always be found in the simple pleasure of obeying God.**

Discernment #3. Serving often reveals my struggles and tests my faith in trusting God.

In the last discernment I stated, "serving always demonstrates my understanding of who I am because of Jesus and the health and vitality of my relationship with God." What I didn't say is this, that what we discover is not always something that is easy to accept. Serving is wrongly categorized as a path to feel good. But serving's true value has nothing to do with your feelings or how you feel about it. The value of serving is measured by the extent to which you grow in true humility. **Spiritual discernment is not always enjoyable, but it does reveal areas of our life for the gospel to work redemption in us.**

Luke 10:38-42 records Martha welcoming Jesus into her home. (And immediately, every woman in the room grows tense at what this means.) Martha grew angry at Mary because she listened to Jesus' teaching while Martha was "*distracted with much serving*". When she complained Jesus responded, "*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*" Martha's serving revealed a wrong belief and false idol in her. **Serving reveals our wrong beliefs and false idols where something other than Jesus has become our "one thing" (priority).**

Serving is the cultivating work of "gospel farming". It turns over areas of hardness in our heart where the gospel seed has not yet found good soil for growth. Struggles in serving often reveals where sin remains in our heart, where self dominates us, where competing affections attack or where wrong thinking prevails. Before you interpret your struggle as a sign you need to stop or get out, first consider that it may be a sign you've identified something that is competing for your heart, and doesn't like that you trying to love God more. **Serving often and regularly identifies false idols that we hold to and need to repent of more than it identifies conflicts of schedule or priorities that we need to reconcile.**

This third discernment may arise instantly, as with Martha, but with larger issues/areas of life it can prove hard and take time to fully discern. Here are **Two Cautions** to aid your discernment in serving's struggles.

1. Be careful that you never pit communion with God against serving others. Struggles in serving often reveal neglect in communion with God. A stagnant communion with God often reveals neglect in serving others. **God designed our worship and service to work together.** They often go hand in hand. God doesn't call us to serve to meet every need that arises, but He does call us to serve. **The most natural expression of serving begins in the fellowship of the local church, accompanying our communion with God.**

2. You can't make up for neglect in one aspect of identity by overcompensating in another. When you try to substitute a lack of serving with a heightened passion for God in worship, your relationship with God will never satisfy the soul. You will feel as though your questions and concerns never get addressed, or that your anxieties, doubts, fears and insecurities never get calmed. It always feels like you run harder and faster, but God stays farther away.

When you try to substitute growing your relationship with God with serving, you will serve out of your strength and your "good works" will only frustrate you. You will always end up frustrated and angry at others, and usually bitter with God.

MPS: Christ-followers are 'made new' by Jesus to live in God's love.

CLOSE The way you understand your relationship with God will always be revealed in the way you relate to other

people. Hurt people hurt people. Healed people help heal others. Bitter people bark and bite others. Joy-filled people bless others. Condemned people condemn others. Forgiven people forgive others. Neglected people neglect others. Served people serve others. **Beloved people love others.**

God's Spirit is working through the gospel this morning to help each person discern where they stand in relation to God.

Q? Have you believed in Jesus, repented of your sin and placed your faith in Him for eternal life?

Q? Christ-follower, are you living in God's love to demonstrate the value of love to all people?

- ...drawing ever closer in relationship to Him through faithful obedience, and
- ...faithfully serving other to demonstrate His love?