**More Like the Master**

In His Love and Joy

Lesson 23

*“Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto his Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1)*

**What the World Needs Now…**

“What the world needs now, is love, sweet love” … so the song goes. We certainly need more love today in an unloving and hateful world. But, we do not need just any kind of love. We need the love of Jesus. Today, many are like the Pharisees who *“pass over justice and the love of God”* (Luke 11:42). These people don’t love others, they only hurt others. And if there is any love in them, it is often love for the wrong things like money (Luke 16:14; 1 Timothy 3:3; 6:10; 2 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 13:5), prestige (Luke 20:46), darkness (John 3:19), the glory of men (John 12:43), worldly behavior (John 15:19; 2 Timothy 4:10), self (2 Timothy 3:2), or pleasure (2 Timothy 3:3-4). We need the love of Jesus that will serve others and sacrifice for them.

Loving people are also happy and joyous people. Jesus had joy along with his love. Our modern world needs the example of Jesus’ love and it also needs the example of Jesus’ joy. We live in a world where many people are unhappy and negative. (Consider how much of the following we have in our society: depression, despair, drug use, and divorce). Many people have a low sense of self-worth. Because of sin in their lives, many are sad and sorrowful. The world needs the joy of Jesus. Both the love and joy of Jesus are examples for us.

Love is a very splendid and powerful thing. But, love is not just a thought, a sentiment, or a word we say. Love is a deed of action. We are to love *“in deed and truth”* (1 John 3:18). True, biblical love (Gr. *agape*) demonstrates itself in attitudes and actions of kindness and goodness toward others. For example, John tells us that *“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16; see also Romans 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 John 3:1). Here, God’s love gave the gift of salvation. John also tells us that God loved his Son and demonstrated his love by giving him all things and showing him all things (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:23-26). Like his Father, Jesus had love and he showed it. Paul writes that Christ loved the church and *“gave himself up for it”* (Ephesians 5:25). In our modern selfish and self-serving world, we need the example of Jesus’ selfless and sacrificial love for others. Let us study how we can be “More Like the Master” in his love and joy.

**Jesus and His Love and Joy**

Jesus was filled with love. Jesus loved his heavenly Father and did everything to please him. He said, *“but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do”* (John 14:31). In contrast, many of the Jews did not have the love of God in themselves (John 5:42) and they would not love Jesus (John 8:42).

Jesus loved his Father and his fellow-man. He loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 11:3-5) and when he wept at Lazarus’ death, the Jews said, *“Behold, how he loved him”* (John 11:36). Jesus loved his disciples *“to the end”* (John 13:1). It is thought that John was *“the disciple whom Jesus loved”* (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). Jesus also loved people enough to correct them. Mark records this about Jesus and the rich, young ruler: *“And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me”* (Mark 10:21).

The ultimate expression of Jesus’ sacrificial love for mankind was his death on the cross. Jesus said, *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Jesus taught his disciples to love *“as I have loved you”* (John 13:34; 15:12). The words *“as I have loved you”* point to the measure of Christ’s love for mankind. His love caused him to give himself entirely on the cross for the sins of the world. Paul writes that Jesus *“loved me, and gave himself up for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

Jesus taught others to love. He taught his disciples to love their enemies and *“do good to them that hate you”* (Matthew 5:43-46; Luke 6:27-35). Here, love is shown by doing good to others. Jesus taught that we must choose to love God over material things (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). Jesus also taught to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-33). Jesus gave a concrete example of loving one’s neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This man showed his love by caring for the injured (Luke 10:27-35). Jesus also taught that one must not love himself more than the Lord: *“He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal”* (John 12:25).

Jesus taught his disciples to love as he loved them, sacrificially. He said, *“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:34-35; see also 15:12, 17). He also taught them the importance of abiding in his love (John 15:9). One abides in the love of Jesus when he continues to love like Jesus and when he continues to keep Jesus’ commandments. Jesus said, *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love”* (John 15:10). Jesus taught Peter the importance of love when he asked Peter three times: *“Do you love me?”* (John 21:15, 16, 17).

One important lesson on love that Jesus taught his disciples concerns keeping God’s commandments. One’s love for God is shown by keeping God’s commandments. Jesus said, ”*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments”* (John 14:15) … *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him”* (John 14:21) … *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me”* (John 14:23-24).

Jesus was filled with joy. Jesus had joy in doing his Father’s will and he had joy in hearing about the success of the gospel. Luke records: *“Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.* *In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes…”* (Luke 10:20-21). Jesus had joy in looking forward to returning to heaven. The author of Hebrews writes: *“looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2).

How did Jesus show that he was a joyful person to be around? First, he was sociable and enjoyed associating with everyone. He accepted invitations to be with people publicly and privately in their homes (Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:29-31; Luke 7:36; 11:37; John 2:1-2; 4:40). Second, he was positive in the face of negative situations. He told his disciples during several discouraging situations: *“Be of good cheer”* (Matthew 9:2,22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; John 16:33). He also calmed others saying, *“Fear not”* (Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:50; 12:32). He offered a word of *“peace”* to his followers on several occasions (Mark 5:34; John 14:1, 16, 27; 16:33; Luke 24:36). Jesus wanted his followers to remain positive under all of life’s circumstances. Finally, Jesus found joy in worshipping God in song (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

Jesus taught others to have joy. Jesus wanted his disciples to have the same joy that he had in serving God. He wanted his joy to be in them. He said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full* (John 15:11; see also 16:20-24). Again Jesus said, *“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves”* (John 17:13). Jesus referred to himself as a model of joy for his disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, he taught his followers how to have a *“blessed”* (happy) life of spirituality (Matthew 5:3-12) and he warned against the negative feelings of anxiety and worry (Matthew 6:25-34).

**The Christian and Loving Joy**

We need to love like Jesus. Christians need to show others the same kind of sacrificial love that Jesus showed. Paul writes: *“And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us…”* (Ephesians 5:2). We are not going to be like the selfish world around us, but we are going to treat others with selfless love and give them what they need: *“Love … seeks not its own”* (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Christians need to show the sacrificial love of Jesus in marriage and in the home (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33; Colossians 3:19). We need to show love toward our neighbor (Romans 13:8-10; Hebrews 13:2). We need to show love toward our brethren (Romans 12:9-10; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 1:15; 4:2; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 5:14; 2 Peter 1:7). We need to “*love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible”* (Ephesians 6:24; see also 1 Corinthians 16:22). We need to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We need to show love toward the elders (1 Thessalonians 5:13). Remember, the key to true, biblical love is giving and sacrifice. Love shows itself in kind deeds toward others. John writes: *“Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”* (1 John 3:16).

We need to have joy like Jesus. Christians need to have the same kind of joyful disposition that Jesus had in all circumstances in life. We have much to be joyful over. We can have joy in salvation from sin (Acts 8:8; 15:3), in a peaceful and unified relationship with our brethren (Romans 12:15; 14:17; 15:13, 32; 16:19; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 2:5), in the truth of God’s word (1 Corinthians 13:6; 2 John 4; 2 John 3), in giving to needy saints (2 Corinthians 8:2), in doing the Lord’s work (Philippians 1:18; 2:17,18, 28; 4:10), and in the prospect of going to heaven (Revelation 19:7).

Christians need to have joy in all circumstances in life, good or bad. We are to *“Rejoice in the Lord always…”* (Philippians 4:4). Again, Paul writes: *“Rejoice always”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16). We can have joy even in afflictions (2 Corinthians 7:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:6), sufferings (Colossians 1:24) and trials (James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6), knowing that God will one day reward us in a better place (Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 4:13). We endure hardships because we can *“rejoice in the hope of the glory of God”* (Romans 5:2-3).

**More Like the Master in His Love and Joy**

Many in the world around us are unloving and sad. But, love and joy are fruits of the Spirit that must be produced in the life of a Christian (Galatians 5:22). Paul writes about *“the love of Christ which passes knowledge”* (Ephesians 3:19). Indeed, the love of Christ is amazing and beyond our full comprehension. Yet, we can see how Jesus loved and follow his example. We are *“taught of God to love one another”* (1 Thessalonians 4:9). God teaches us to love using the example of his Son Jesus Christ. Let us all be “More Like the Master” in love and joy.

**Questions**

1. How do many people in the world compare to Jesus with respect to love and joy?

2. What is included in true, biblical love?

3. What did Jesus do to show he was filled with love for others?

4. What were some things that Jesus taught his followers about love?

5. What did Jesus do to show that he was filled with joy in his life?

6. What were some things that Jesus taught his followers about having joy?

7. What people will be the recipients of a Christian’s sacrificial love?

8. What are some reasons that Christians have to be joyful?

9. Why should Christians be joyful even in afflictions, sufferings, and trials?