

**Sun., Oct. 4: Holy Communion, World Communion Sunday**  
**[Pastor Andrew Gone, Sanctify off, Worship music led by Suzy]**

**Message Series:** Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy

Memory Verse: John 13:34-35 "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other."

Message: "Messy Love: Decision"

Scripture: Romans 13:8-14

Blurb: Blurb: Love is not a feeling but a decision. We usually link how we treat people to how they behave or how we feel about them. God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves pushes us past our feelings and calls us to make the decisive decision to love others. Come this Sunday for God to reorient you away from treating others based on what they do and instead on what Jesus has done.

*Outdoor worship.*

*Offering boxes available as people leave.*

*Parking spaces designated for drive in worshipers.*

*Holy Communion handed out as people arrive.*

*Country/continent signs for 12 volunteers.*

**OPENING MUSIC:** *They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love* -Suzy

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

HC: Open Communion - everyone welcome to receive (need elements)

Doing a bit differently, receiving HC earlier in the service.

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." -John 13:34-35

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Suzy

*Love the Lord*

*In Christ Alone*

*Build My Life*

Worship Prayer -Suzy

**GROW MOMENT:** “Grow Groups” -Pastor David

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE / SERVE MOMENT / PRAYERS:** World Communion Sunday

*Have kids and other volunteers stand in a circle around the gathered worshipers, each in the direction of a country or continent in that direction. Give each person a sign with that country's name on it to hold. Invite the congregation to stand and face each sign/direction as you go through each country/continent and lead a prayer for Christians in that direction.*

Prayers for: North: Canada

North-East: Kazakstan

East-North: Europe

East: Middle East

East-South: Africa

South-East: South America

South: Mexico

South-West: Pacific Islands

West-South: Australia

West: China

West-North: North & South Korea

North-West: Russia

**HOLY COMMUNION:** World Communion Sunday

Prayers

Words of Assurance

The Great Thanksgiving

Words of Institution

Prayers for the Holy Spirit

The Lord's Prayer, ecumenical version

Receiving the Elements - *face a different direction as you partake of the elements*

Closing Prayer

**MESSAGE:** Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy #4: Messy Decision -Pastor David

Messy: Loving Others Isn't Easy. Boy, isn't that true? Aren't people just so irritating? No...stop looking at your neighbor there! Eyes front! I mean, the things they do, they say, they *don't* do, how they live in their own world, how they mess up their lives and expect *you* to fix it. Oooo, so difficult! Now, as you are thinking about *difficult-to-love them*, don't forget that in their minds, YOU are part of their difficult-to-love “them!” We'll come back to this.

But dealing with others is messy! And dealing with *family* is messy! Do I hear an “Amen!”? Talk about difficult. Those closest to us know how to really push our buttons. And they don't go away! We have to keep dealing with them over and over again...every family gathering, there they are, same old antics. Do you ever pray for certain loved ones to get the flu right before Christmas?

We've been talking about how God calls us to live an alternative way than the rest of the world. That different way is the way of godly love. It's to be Jesus to others. But what about *those people*, or what if they're being a jerk, and proud of it? What then?

Four times the Bible gives the Second Greatest Command, to love others as yourself. The first time is the original context, where God gives it in the Law on top of Mt. Sinai. Leviticus 19:18,

and there its context is radical forgiveness. We forgive because God first forgave us so much more. The second time is in Luke when Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Loving others means showing them mercy, because God first showed us greater mercy. Last week we saw the third time, which was in Matthew where Jesus tells the rich man to give up everything to follow Him. We sacrifice because God first sacrificed far more for us.

The fourth time the Bible tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves comes from Paul, in his letter to the Christians in Rome: Romans 13:8-11. Here, messy love is a decision.

Let's read this passage. Now, the first concept Paul uses is to not be in debt to anyone. He's making a point about love. So don't let *debt* derail you. Paul is not saying that we can never borrow money, never use a credit card. Paul is working from the ancient world understanding of debt, that your creditor has first claim on you. For us today, this means don't put yourself into debt where your creditors can control your life. Don't owe money in a way where you aren't free to follow whatever God may put on your heart. Since God may call you to move, be sure your mortgage isn't too big to make that impossible. At any moment God may lay it upon your heart to give away a chunk of money, so be sure you are financially positioned to do that. Don't live your life so that your debt restricts your ability to respond to God's leading in your life. Don't become such a slave to your creditors that you must pass on something God is calling you to. This is the kind of debt Paul is talking about. So, hear Paul talk about the slavery of love.

Romans 13:8-11: "8 Don't be in debt to anyone, except for the obligation to love each other. Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law. 9 The commandments, Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't desire what others have, and any other commandments, are all summed up in one word: You must love your neighbor as yourself. 10 Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law."

So, the commandments are all summed up in two greatest commandments. The greatest is to love God with your whole being. We see this outlined in the first four of the 10 Commandments. The second greatest commandment is to love others. This is described in the last six of the 10 Commandments. Paul names some of them in this passage, right?

Don't live in a way where you become a slave to debt, or to any other authority on earth, except the slavery of love. Don't be in debt to *any one person* in money. Be in debt to *everyone* in love. Bind yourself only to the obligation to love others. This was our memory verse a couple of weeks ago—it should be familiar: loving others fulfills the law. The commandments are all summed up in the word "love." Love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, we saw the Jewish expert try to keep this commandment in his head, rather than living it out in his life, by asking specifics about this, like who is my neighbor, or last week, like what does this actually mean. The commandment sits here, plain and obvious, like an elephant in the room.

So, here's the issue: do we do this? We *know* the commandment. We can try to deflect by rationalizing about it, but here it sits. Do you actively apply yourself to love others by your actions...I mean, in the full way that God wants us to? Even when they're being smug jerks or meanspirited?

It's "no," isn't it...I mean, if we're honest? We don't love others the way we know we ought, or to the extent that God intends. We don't do for one what we want to do for everyone. We pray for our cousin to be sick at the holidays, and we justify our lack of loving actions by labeling our coworker an idiot.

Paul, here, describes love in very disturbing terms. He says it's an obligation, a debt. We can't get out of it! It is something we have *to make* ourselves pay. It's a decision.

I find this refreshing, however, because Paul is being honest. It's not about what we want to do, or what is easy, or fun. Loving is not liking. How we think about love is all wrong. We've made

love the extreme form of *like*. There's enemy on one side, then, indifference, then acquaintance, then liking, and then, for those we like the most—who we really, really like—we love. This scale is not biblical. There is a scale—from enemy to indifference, to acquaintance and liking—but over the whole scale, over all the folks, is the command to love each and every one of them. We need to renew our minds—how we understand love—to grow in holiness.

Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.” (John 13:34-35)

So, key point #1: Love is a command. It's an obligation. It's a debt we must pay. We owe it, because God first paid a debt of love to us. We can never repay the love that God first showed us. That works a love within us, grows a love within us, by which we can then, in turn, love God back, and live out that love to others. If you love Jesus, don't bother with honking: do a radical act of love for your annoying neighbor! I'm sorry, but this makes me think...I've always wanted to get one of those bumper stickers—honk if you love Jesus—then pull out in front of an atheist, and then stop at a green light. What could they do? But that's not loving very well, is it?

Back to point: we love, because He first loved us. We have a debt of love we can never repay, but we sure get to have a whole lot of fun trying!

Key point #2: Love is a decision. We don't have to, you know. We can say, “no” to God's command. Now, it never goes well for us when we do, but it's still our choice. And so we must make it a stance of our wills to decide to love others. There will always be many more reasons why we shouldn't. We will have self-rationalizations and self-justifications why we don't have to do it here, for this person, in this particular case. And they—boy is this true!—they will give you all kinds of reasons to not treat them with love. But remember point #1?

We don't look at them when we make our decision. Did you hear that? We don't look at those annoying people, those irritating jerks, when we decide how we treat them. We don't even look at ourselves, what we want to do, or what our capacity is. We look squarely at Jesus. We don't look at what *they do*, we look at what *Jesus did*. And when we see His great love for us, and how He has loved us so radically—we who are selfish, irritating jerks—that's when we are able to make the decision to love them like God commands us to.

We usually want to love only those we like. We put clauses on our love: if you behave well, or do certain things, or make good decisions, or don't mess up your life, or mine. We want to choose whom we love. But don't take your eyes off the cross! Jesus loved you before you were loveable. Love is a commitment, not a feeling or emotion. It's a wilful determination, a stance squarely footed on the cross. We look at Jesus and decide to love our neighbor.

Third key point: love is a verb. It is action, activity. It's not a feeling in your heart for someone. It's an action you do for someone. You pass forward the sacrifice Jesus gave for you. You choose to live for the other, seeking their highest good. Love pushes us to go the next step of radical. People should be able to see your love. You can't see a feeling, but you can see when someone actively serves someone else and passes along a blessing. If you were accused of not loving, could people around you come to your defense, naming specific ways that you have shown love to them?

Again, we cannot do this in our own strength. We struggle too hard with anger, bitterness, gossiping, comparison, getting even, feeling slighted. Our noble strength to do good doesn't go very far. It's easy to love people from a distance. But God calls us to love those who are up in our business. And then, our own strength to love, wears out quickly.

I keep imagining playing a video game, with the life bar across the top left. Your character stands there, taking hits as you try to figure out what to do, and all the while your life bar goes down,

down, down. Before you know it, you're defeated, game over. This is what it's like to face those people. You can't last long.

But Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit to live within us to replenish our life, that little red cross to fill our decreasing bar, to respond in love with a capacity we cannot on our own. Nice people wear out. Disciples keep on going. If you find yourself getting low on loving someone, you need to check your connection to Jesus. You're trying to do it in your own strength.

Kids, I want you to listen up here, too. This is for all of us. Our job this week is to try to love people who make you mad. So, when you find yourself getting mad at someone, I want us to stop and pray. Before you lash out, be mean back, or scream at them, stop and go pray to Jesus. Ask Him to help you to love better. Remember that He loves you, and treats you well, even when you're mean and difficult. Ask Him to help you to love others the same way He loves you. You will find that this simple prayer changes things. It will certainly change you. You just have to remember to do it! And that hard. So, that's why we need others to help us.

So, all of us—kids and adults—will you also be a helper? When you see someone of us getting angry, will you gently and graciously remind each other to stop and pray? We need your help. Help us to love well. Intervene.

This is World Communion Sunday, and on this day we hear Jesus' command again to love our neighbors as ourselves. We are all neighbors in our world. We pray for far off countries. But when you go home, do it again: face the different directions, and as you do, pray for Jesus to give you the Holy Spirit to help you also love your closest neighbors with actions of His love.

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG:** *We Believe* -Suzy

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** -Pastor David

Next week: Moving indoors!

Next week's message: Battle of the Boardroom of Your Soul

Grow Group sign up

**OFFERING:** -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." -John 13:34-35

**BENEDICTION** -Pastor David

**CLOSING MUSIC** -Suzy