



**John 15: 9 - 17**

**‘This is my commandment that you love one another’.**

Jesus is speaking to us, right now, let’s hear him again:

**‘This is my commandment that you love one another’.**

Today, the word love is probably overused and undoubtedly undervalued at the same time. We love everything! here are a few ‘loves’ of mine:

I love Florida, fish and chips, ice cream and chocolate! My friends and my dog! I probably don’t differentiate one, use of love, from another.

Love is, and always, has been a complex notion.

Is it an emotion, a state of being, a choice, an ability, a gift, a force, or all of the above?

The English language has only one word for love but the ancient Greeks had eight different words, the common four being: Storge. Philia, Eros and Agape.

**Storge:** or affection, covers a collection of loves. Like animals, soft slippers, old clothes, the thump of a sleepy dog’s tail on the kitchen floor.

**Philia:** for friendship love.

**Eros:** romantic love.

AND...

The Greek word for Christ like spiritual love, **Agape:**  
unconditional, undeserved, selfless, sacrificial love

- It is the love of God, for us in Jesus.
- The unselfish love of Christians of one person for another.

**Agape** is the love that Jesus is using in our bible passage, when he says: **“this is my commandment that you love one another”**

This is NOT ice cream and chocolate love; this is NOT the love I have for Florida or my dog and friends. This is **Agape** love.

Jesus is the reason we even know what **Agape** love is! In laying down His life for us, He taught us everything we need to know about real love.

We, sometimes, love who we want, when we want, how we want, if we want, AND... this is far, far, far from God's **Agape** Love.

God does not just love us, or teach us how to love, He is love! He is **Agape**.

**Agape** is generous:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)

**Agape** is permanent.

“For I am convinced that nothing, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

**Agape** is boundless, extravagant, lavish, costly, limitless, measureless and unconditional. This love works when you give it away, like the story of 2 seas.

### **Two Seas in Israel**

There are two seas in Israel.

One is fresh, and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees spread their branches over it and stretch out their thirsty roots to sip of its healing waters.

The River Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water from the hills. So, it laughs in the sunshine. And houses are built near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind of life is happier because it is there.

The River Jordan flows on out into another sea. Here there are no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds, no children's laughter. The air hangs heavy above its water.

What makes this mighty difference in these neighbour's seas? Not the River Jordan. It empties the same good water into both. Not the soil in which they lie; not in the country round about.

## **This is the difference.**

The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows in another flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure. The other sea hoards its income jealously. Every drop it gets, it keeps.

The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. This other sea gives nothing. It is named Dead.

There are two kinds of people in this world. There are two seas in Israel.

**Agape** is a choice, a deliberate effort for another's highest good, and is demonstrated through action. God set the standard for **Agape** love in sending Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners.

It's not this bubble gum love

It's this?

We seem to struggle to classify love, and we are constantly redefining it, but God's definition is clear and will never change:

**"Love is** patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians, 13: 4 – 8)

**Love is not** what I watched on 'Panorama' on 'Racism in the Church of England' or the distressing Report by the Anti-Racism Taskforce from 'Lament to Action'. (that is required reading for us all). In this same week, I had to go for an X ray and the radiologist asked me what I did, so I said I'm a C of E chaplain. He talked to me about finding his own faith after, too, many years. He shared his story of coming to England, from Jamaica, with his parents. They went to their local parish church, at the end of the service the vicar asked them not to come again, they would be served better in a church of their own. I was so shocked, and not quite knowing what to say, I just said "I'm so sorry", his reply: "thank

you". Although I was probably only about 5 at the time, and It wasn't my fault, it is a corporate responsibility **now, it is my** responsibility now and **it is yours**.

The report states: we need every person in every church and every school to root it out. That means our church, our schools, our communities.

Skin colours, hair colours, alternative backgrounds and cultures, are all to be united in Jesus. It's not just about loving those who think and act and look like us.

At every level we are to be people of love: we know what love is and what it isn't.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We have the same name: 'Christians'.

When Jesus lived on earth, he showed us how to love, HIS legacy of love.

- The Good Samaritan, my 6-year-old grandson had homework on this one and concluded it meant being friends with people outside of your friendship group! (out of the mouth of babes)
- The Prodigal Son
- The Good Shepherd
- The Lost Sheep
- The man born blind given sight
- Lazarus raised from the dead

What did the disciples think it all meant? What do we think it all means?

**Love one another, as I have loved you.**

**Let those words seep into our being, deep in our heart.**

**Love one another, as I have loved you.**

It's that simple and..... that difficult.

**Agape** is a radical invitation

Dream Big!

Dream what God can do, if, we love one another with **Agape** love.

The gospel message is: Jesus loves **You**, His love is unchanged, **we** have found it, and now, **we**, are to love one another.

When Jesus changes your life; you want to point others to the warmth of his touch and share the inclusiveness of God's **Agape**.

**Amen**