

Radical #12/14

Radical Love

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We are in a series on Radical Discipleship and last week, Michael summarized the previous 11 weeks to help us integrate all of these into our entire lives as we follow Christ. We have two more weeks in this series: the root of this discipleship Luke 9:23. Radical means the essence or extreme nature of following Jesus. Last week's summary leads us into the conversation for this week which also encompasses everything: Radical Love.

Love is everywhere. It's in our music, TV, crime shows, the reality shows that try to make people get together and love each other, our politics, and our conversations. For example: Titanic is considered the greatest love movie of the 1990s...but this further exemplifies that we don't know much about love. Titanic was about an old woman who has a memory of how she was engaged to be married 80 years earlier but she meets someone on a boat and has an affair and cheats on her fiance and then he dies and this is what she remembers 80 years later. It's really a terrible movie. Let's move on.

Love is all over our culture and we are inundated by what our culture thinks about love and most of the time what we get is wrong. Of course, bits and pieces show some understanding. What does the Bible say about love? Love is also all over the Bible. In the Old Testament, we may think that God is portrayed as wrathful and vengeful but that the New Testament is full of Jesus and love. But really, love is throughout the bible. The wrath is God's response to His love for his people.

HESED is a Hebrew word sometimes translated as "love" or "kindness" or "faithfulness." An example of this **Psalm 136: His love endures forever**. The truth is, we really don't really know how to translate **HESED**. What we do know is that **HESED** is predominant in God's character. It reflects his covenant loyalty and the promises he makes to his people. It goes back to Abraham whose children wandered away and God's love draws them back. The Israelites wandered through the desert and worshiped other gods and idols and had evil kings: God's **HESED** drew them back. Jeremiah wrote about the Israelites' exile into Babylon. Just before this, a false prophet said this exile would end after two years but Jeremiah corrected him and said it would be 70 years. He told them to plant gardens and build houses because they would be there for awhile.

Jer 31:3-6

3 The LORD appeared to us in the past,^[a] saying:

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

4 I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt.

Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful.

5 Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria;
the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.

6 There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim,
‘Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.’”

In this passage, **HESED** is translated as unfailing kindness and goodness. He showed his covenant loyalty to them even after they fell away and worshiped other gods again and again. **HESED** is about God’s character. **The love of God is dependent on his character, not on the worthiness of the people and their ability to worship him.** We see this over and over and over. This is not to say that people shouldn’t follow the law but God’s love is not dependent on this. It’s dependent on his character: His **HESED**.

OT written in Hebrew, NT written in Greek and therefore, we must have a different word for **HESED** in Greek: In John 3:16 we have a bridge to **AGAPE**.

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

Jesus is talking with Nicodemus, a Jewish priest, about being born again. The essence and echo goes back to God’s **HESED**, his character and loyalty to his promises.

What is agape? First, you can listen to Michael’s sermon on the four loves where he went through all four words used for love in the NT. Agape is about self-sacrifice and service: it’s about serving the other person.

I John 4:7-21

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. **14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. **16** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. **17** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. **18** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19 We love because he first loved us. **20** Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. **21** And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

God is love, God is agape: this is **HESED**, his love for his people, his service, and self-sacrificial love. We love because he first loved us: we are invited into this agape love because it's been poured on us. Regarding discipleship and following Christ, it's a call to agape love. This love encompasses all the things we've talked about so far: parenting, marriage, even waiting. You can hear the echo of this throughout this series on radical discipleship.

The question: What is radical about this love? What is the extreme nature of this love, the essence of it?

John 3:16 is why I'm talking about this today. This is a gigantic topic.

I John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

To radically love someone is to know them and give yourself up for them, even unto death. This is the invitation: Jesus laid his life down and we ought to do the same. I think this is connected to knowing our brothers and sisters. If I gave you \$500 and told you to give it away, if you didn't know a person, it would be a lot easier than if the person were close to you. We are NOT invited into random acts of kindness, it's actually to lay yourself down for the person, people, closest to you: your spouse, your children, your community. It's saying we are known and loved by God.

However it's not comfortable to be known? What does it mean to be known by God? We are known in every circumstance of life.

I invited you to spend some time in **Psalm 139** this week:

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

God has known us since we were conceived, throughout our childhood and adulthood to the end. This includes the painful and broken places. We sometimes forget that God knew us in the painful places! When I was alone in grades 1-3 and was bullied and teased, God was in the midst of this. David makes a big deal of this in the Psalms when he is surrounded by his enemies. He knows God is there in every circumstance of life. It is comforting but hard to hold onto this. God knows the depths of our sin, the evil within us, the things we have done to others.

Rom 5

6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.

Have you seen the movie Cars? At the end of the movie, there is a race and the hero is doing ridiculous things and gets into the lead and as he pulls to the end, a car crashes and the hero stops just before the finish line and goes back and gives up winning the race to help the other car. The thing is: he helps the *nice* car, not the *enemy* car. I don't think he would have stopped and helped the bad-guy car. But in the movie, the bad guy car wins and everyone "boos." I think he would have won the race if the bad guy had crashed.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God knows us in the depths of our sin and this is the place where Christ died for us. Not because we were worth it or righteous or because we had confessed our sin but it was because of his character of love.

II Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

God's love knows us in the depths of our sin but his love moves us to new life, away from the old into the new. God knows who he created us to be.

We are KNOWN: this statement of radical love is to know others and give yourself up for them, even to death. We are called to know one another and to step into giving ourselves up for the other.

Let's practice this; let's get to know each other:

1. Ask people around you to tell you stories about themselves, from when they were kids until now.

2. Get to know the people around you in the depths of their sin. This is harder: you cannot force someone to confess their sins. But you can confess your sins to them in the shadow of the cross. You can step into allowing the depths of your sin to be known and show others how God loves you in your sin.

3. Pray for others and find out what God is calling them to. We love with God's love: the love we offer is not dependent on their worthiness nor is it dependent on our love: it's dependent on God's love and character. When we are willing to lay down our lives in service, we participate in moving from moving from the old to the new live. We get to participate in this!

Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 3**:

4 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family^[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

le to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Paul wants us to know the fullness of God: the height, depth, width, and breath of his love, his covenant, his sacrifice while we were sinners, his loyalty: and in knowing this we can offer it to one another.

Responses:

David S: My response is that the Titanic love is not really love: but what do we do with our feelings? God REALLY loves us: how do we get our feelings aligned with this truth?

-We had a sermon on submission: you will not always LOVE your wife or brother but you are called to agape love towards them. We submit our own feelings and selves to Christ is what allows us to step into this agape love.

David R: God knows me in spite of me and loves me anyways: this scares me! -I could have spent more time on how being known is terrifying. We are known in our abuses and in our traumas: **God was there** is both comforting and terrifying. It also calls us to forgive.

Hannah: I have this picture of a dad watching his kids doing a mediocre job on a stage and just delighting in them: -A big struggle I have now is over my son's language being behind and how frustrated he is in communicating. I can often figure out what he wants but sometimes I can't. I want to serve him better: this barrier is not there for God, however.