



## St John Lutheran Church

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St. John 13:31-35

"Created to be Loved and to Love"

**There is something** in our makeup... **something put** there by our Creator... **that causes** a longing for love...**a need for love. To feel** a tender touch... **to have** gentle and comforting words poured into our ears is vitally important to life. **Without that love** we are less than whole. **To be loved** gives meaning to life... **it helps** shape our identity... **wraps us** in the safety we need. **A life without** love is a life without real meaning... **a life** without real safety... **and without** real purpose. **That is not** something you have to dig around in your mind to understand. **It just is the way it is. And it is** not supposed to be that way. **We were Created** to be Loved and to Love. **Sin changed all of that!**

**The God who** created you... **that God** is love. **That is why** you exist, my friends ...**for He** created you to love you. **He created you** to be His love-receiving people and... **having received** it... **to give** that love away to one another. **And there is** where we bump into the problem. **On our own**, we are not the people we were created to be. **We are damaged** goods...**strange, foreign**, broken creatures before God. **We have been** "sin-ripped" from the people we were created to be... **Paradise-lost people...** **people who** have chosen to go it alone and wander in the lonely, loveless, wilderness places without God... **without help** or hope in this world.

**Our identity has** been stolen by sin so that we no longer know who we are... **or Whose we are... or why** we are. **Sin has robbed** us of our security. **You see, that** is where you end up when God is no longer trusted. **You no longer** know who you are ... **why you are ... Whose you are. Sin is** a great and horrible thief that rips God's evergiving love for you right out of your heart. **If you are** not getting it from Him... **you can't** give it back to Him ...**you can't** give it out to your neighbor.

**That is why**, as sinners, we still despise Him rather than love Him. That is why we run away from Him **instead of to Him. That is why** we are so wrapped up in "self-esteem." **Sin tells us** that we have to get the name of our real god right "Self." ... **Yes ... but we still need love.**

**And the problem** grows. **What we too** often know as love is nothing more than a **curved-in-on-ourselves** thing. **If love requires** an object to be loved... **the object** of broken choice is the "Me" of Self rather than the "Thee" of God. **That was the** way of Adam, and that is the natural way of you and me. **So, where do** we find the solution to our problem? **Where do we** go when we are the problem? **Where do we** go when we have chosen to go it alone? **Where do we** go when we have deserted God? **When we have** abandoned His love for us? **We go to the god** we have created to replace Him...**ourselves? That is just** more of the same old problem, is it not?

**So, what is** the solution? **The solution is** to know that you are loved by God. **And how are** you supposed to know that? **How are you** supposed to believe that? **Listen! Listen to God's** love for you in Christ Jesus! **If sin drives** you to forsake God in favor of yourself... **God's great** self-giving love moves Him to forsake His only-begotten Son for you. **If sin causes** you to abandon God and His great... **beyond-all-human-power-to-express love for you... then Christ** is God's way of saying that He has chosen not to abandon you in your sin... **but in** that same very great, **beyond-all-human-power-to-express** love... **has chosen** to save you from it.

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**If sin threw** you out of the Garden of Eden and threw you into the depths of hell... **Christ is** God's way of snatching you out of hell and restoring you to His Paradise. **If sin turned** you into something foreign... **alien, and** broken in God's sight... **Christ Jesus** is His way of making you into something "new" as His dearly loved sons and daughters. **Listen! Christ is the** solution to your problem... **God's freely-given** solution to your self-inflicted problem.

**That is why** your Lord, on the night in which He was betrayed, said "**Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him.**" **It is problem** solution time! **A cross-shaped** problem solution time. **For go-it-aloners** He went the way of the cross all alone... **abandoned even** by His Father in heaven... **He was left** bloodied and dead on the tree. **For forsakers of** God's love... **He was** forsaken of God's love. **For sinners He** became the greatest Sinner... **and paid** the great and horrible price of sins judgment.

**I know that** sounds like a major "**problem**"... **but that** is the "**glory**" of it all! **The cross is** God's eternal solution! **The cross is** not Christ's defeat... **it is** His greatest triumph. **In being laid** waste on Golgotha... **He laid** waste to sin, death, and devil. **His death is** the great conquest of your own death. **His forever-rising** to new life gives you new life that runs all the way into the "**new heaven and new earth.**"

**Yours is a life** filled to overflowing with the forgiveness of God, my friends. **Yours is a** life that runs over with His comforting presence and His all-for-you-love. **And in this** Christ, you know who you are...**holy people... bathed in** holy water... **and given** His holy Name. **You know Whose** you are...**the children** of the Most High. **You are the** people of God... **people whose** lives are lived out in the ever-sure promises of God.

**Christ is God's "Yes"** to you... **and in** Him you say the "**Amen**" back to God. **People of God** here in time and hereafter in eternity "**Amen**" **people. People created and** re-created by Him to love now and through all eternity. "**Amen...yes, yes, it is so.**" "**And all who were appointed for eternal life believed.**" "**Amen... Gift received Lord. Gift received.**"

**You are Created** to be Loved and to Love. **And even though** our Lord has ascended into heaven... **that doesn't** stop Him from really being with you as He promised... "**even to the end of the age.**" **Remember His Promise? "I will never desert you or forsake you."**

**Listen: He is thee** Christ...**this is thee** Son of God who is with you in times of happiness ...**and He** is with you in your loneliest... **most loveless moments. He is your** Lord who is with you in this place right now... **the Lord** who even now speaks to you in love. **He is the** Lord who comes to you and sets before you His Feast of Life and Love.

**This, my friends,** gives life meaning! **This tells you** without a doubt that you are forever loved! **Christ crosses time** and eternity an He really and tenderly touches you personally... **and He** pours His Word of love and assurance...**His Words** of Promise... **into your ears!** "**Take, eat. This is My Body for you. Take, drink. The Blood of My heart poured out for you for your forgiveness.**" **Christ gives Himself** to us His Meal so that He can "**wipe away the tears from your eyes**" in the here and now...**A Meal** to assure you that He "**will wipe away every tear from your eye**" in heaven and eternity.

**You cannot give** away what you have not first received, my friends. **You cannot give** away the love of God in Christ if you have not first received it. **But you bear the** Name of Christ. **More than that... you have** been gifted with Christ. **You have been "made new"** in Him. **The love you** receive from Him is the love you give out. **The agape love** of God...**His purposeful** love is given to you so that you may pass on what you have received.

**This is not** the warm fuzzy "feel good for the moment love" that the world knows and seeks. **No... God's love** is reflected in His expectations shown in the two Tables of His Law. **Commandments 1-3 deal** with your relationship with you God. **Having no other** gods before you...**respecting God's** Name and remembering the Sabbath and keeping it Holy. God demands these things, not to control, you or demean you...but to gather you in His House so that He may give you His gifts in Christ.

**Commandments 4-10** deal with your relationship with your neighbors... **honoring your** parents...**not killing...not committing** adultery... **not stealing... not even** coveting what your neighbor has. **Why? Because you** were created in God's image...**you are** special to your Lord...**special enough** for Him to die for you personally...**He alone** gives you all you need...**and having** received His gifts... **you pass** them on to your neighbors. **You don't take** from your neighbors...**you respect** them...**love them** with the same purposeful love that you yourselves have received from your Lord. **You serve the** way you have been served!

**You are not** stuck with a **self-seeking, self-serving....a for-me-only** kind of love. **No, you have** received the self-giving... **other-serving** love of God wrapped up in Christ Jesus. **You are the Baptized. You are the Absolved. You are the** Body and Blood fed by Christ Himself. **That is why** you can say with St. Paul, "**I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me.**"

**You are His** "new creation." **Christ in you... and you** in Christ. **It is Christ,** then, who enlivens you to love one another. **It is Christ** who enlivens you to be the people He has re-created you to be ... **people who** are always receiving His **for-you-always love ... people who** are always giving His **for-you-always love** out to others. **You are His** "**Peace-be-with-you-I-forgive-you**" mouth to one another.

**You are His** tender, healing touch... **His comforting,** consoling words to one another. **You are His** face... **His voice... and His** hands to one another. **You are a** little Christ to and for one another. **Created to receive** His love and to give it away to others. **Your are His** Holy and royal priesthood... **His Holy** ones who bear His Name and His Promise. **You are the** beloved and forgiven people of God. **In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit ...Amen.**

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