

**Sermon Series: Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Fellowship—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—
2/19/2006**

Title: “**Perfected Love**”

Text: **Matthew 22: 34-40**

Intro.: *Ills.: Definition of Community*

Theme: The love of our fellowship with one another must first start in our relationship with God through Jesus and then radiate out to others from a love made perfect within us.

Love which births love

- *We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4: 19*
- We can't love without God loving us, first (God as the **cause** of our love)
 1. By nature human beings are selfish and sinfully look to take advantage of each other
 2. That is why we need a Savior from ourselves—one who can bring a transformed heart to transform action
- We can't love without loving God, first (Our love as the **effect** of the Spirit's work within us)
 1. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love other believers. The person who doesn't grow in love remains in death. 1 John 3: 14*
 2. When we don't see that love toward others pulsating within us, our first humble reaction should be not to pin blame on others but to reflect why the selfless and sacrificing love of Jesus is not manifesting itself within us
 3. Humble prayer each morning should be, “**Lord help me to love this day as I have been loved by you.**”

Love which comprehends the responsibility of freedom

- Loving your neighbor does not mean loving yourself less but loving yourself, also
 1. When we love God, first, then his love naturally plays itself out in our lives toward others and toward myself
 2. Loved so that we would be freed to love (made special and saved because we are special to God)
 3. Freedom with responsibility
 - a. **Print and read Galatians 5: 13-15**
 - b. Learning to refrain from giving back what is deserved and saying what is probably true, because of grace received
- Loving your neighbor means loving those “nearest to you”
 1. Loving your family members despite a familiarity which breeds contempt
 - a. **Ills.: Martin Luther's quote**
 - b. Never allowing the personal hurt given to justify a sinful response
 - c. **Ills.: Loving in the abstract but not the concrete**
 - d. Give what isn't deserved because that is **grace**
 2. Loving my neighbor, coworker, extended family as “**spheres of influence**” of my witness to Jesus' story in my life
 3. Loving my enemy and the stranger because they need it
- Love principles born out of Christ respect
 1. Love does no harm
 - a. *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:10*
 - b. Not “*delighting in evil*”(1 Cor. 13: 6) that befalls another
 - c. Going the extra mile to make sure that something might harm, which you see, is taken care of before it can happen
 - d. **Ills.: Negligence by omission (Cheney hunting incident, countless plane and train accidents)**
 - e. *Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. James 4: 17*
 - f. Our confession and God's forgiveness is both for what we know and also for what we do not know as sin
 2. Love seeks the highest and best for the other person
 - a. *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?—to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

- b. This takes a “*Christ attitude*,” which sets aside personal gain or agenda, for the others sake (Phil 2: 3-5)
- 3. Love risks to set another free
 - a. *Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. John 15: 13-14*
 - b. *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Isaiah 58: 6*
 - c. When we live in the resurrection hope, what can we sacrifice or have taken from us that can't/won't be restored

Definition of Community

Years ago, when speaker of the house Sam Rayburn heard he had terminal cancer, he shocked everyone when he announced he was going back to his small town in Bonham, Texas. People said to him: "They have got the finest facilities in Washington, D. C. Why go back to that little town?" Rayburn's response speaks to the priceless importance of community. He said, "Because in Bonham, Texas, they know if you're sick, and they care when you die." **J. R. Love, Rushton, Louisiana**

Your wife is your nearest neighbor

The Christian is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love. **Martin Luther, Christian Reader, Vol. 32, no. 3.**

Loving in the abstract but not the concrete

A professor of psychology had no children of his own, but whenever he saw a neighbor scolding a child for some wrongdoing, he would say, "you should love your boy, not punish him." One hot summer afternoon the professor was doing some repair work on a concrete driveway leading to his garage. Tired out after several hours of work, he laid down the trowel, wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and started toward the house. Just then out of the corner of his eye he saw a mischievous little boy putting his foot into the fresh concrete. He rushed over, grabbed him, and was about to spank him severely when a neighbor leaned from a window and said, "Watch it, Professor! Don't you remember? You must 'love' the child!" At this, he yelled back furiously, "I do Love him in the abstract, but not in the concrete!"...

Matthew 22:34-40

[34]Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. [35] One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: [36] "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

[37] Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

[38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [40] All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Galatians 5:13-15

[13]You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. [14] The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." [15] If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.