

Ancient Future Mission (Week 2): Go and Love
Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less



Ancient Future
Mission
• Go and Be
• Go and Love
• Go and Tell
• Come and Belong

- 1) Yesterday, we covered the second of four reasons that the early Christianity grew, even while being under constant duress and operating on the margins of the Roman Empire - go and love.
- 2) If you've been in or around church, it's no surprise that love is Christianity's highest virtue for which we should be known by others (see, for example, John 13.34-35).
- 3) However much this doesn't surprise us, it certainly stood out in the ancient Roman world: Roman virtues did not include or advocate for love, not to mention only Roman men could be virtuous (not women, children, slaves, etc.).
- 4) Likewise, love is not a chief or prioritized value for modern Americans, being absent from the thirteen identified by L. Robert Kohls in his "Values Americans Live By."
- 5) This Christian commitment to love is directed toward "neighbors," a word that connotes proximity and a lack of choice, and this neighborly love should be on par with the devotion we show God (Jesus uses the same word, "agape," for love in both the 1st and 2nd great commandments).
- 6) Thus, it's not hard to conclude that if we're living too fast or busy to not have the time, attention, or energy to love our neighbors, we need take a long pause and find a way to change course.
- 7) This neighborly love was directed in particular to those on the margins of or overlooked by Roman culture: this is why the New Testament pays specific attention to women, children, slaves, orphans, and widows.
- 8) It is not enough to serve those in need, we must ask, "Do they experience our service as love?" - do we preserve their dignity, do we see ourselves as needy as they are (if perhaps in a different way), do we engage with them interpersonally, do we see them as capable, do we invite them into community, etc.?
- 9) Sometimes, this neighborly love expresses itself as advocacy: according to The Brief Statement of Faith (1984), this is central to the purpose of church and entails "to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace."
- 10) Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann describes this as the "prophetic" work of the church: "The prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, grieve in a society that practices denial, and express hope in a society that lives in despair...The task of our prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."

Explore More This Week

1) Live this week with your heart and eyes wide open to your "neighbors," those around you as you move through your days. Pray for them, offer them small kindnesses, invest some time, whatever God's Spirit prompts you to do.

2) To remind yourself of the high calling of Christian love, read through and reflect on this paraphrase of "the love chapter" in the Bible, 1 Cor. 13, written by pastor J. Mark Jordan:

"Love smiles through the pain of being hurt, criticized, misunderstood and ignored without constantly complaining. Love never confronts anyone unless it is with a kind, well-considered word and does not blast them out of the room. Love doesn't judge or want what others have...It doesn't go around talking about God being unfair or people being uncaring when the real problem is envy and jealousy. It shuns the limelight and recognition. It doesn't have an ego problem. Love declines to make a scene about everything and won't make mountains out of molehills. It will not choose inappropriate and disruptive ways to make a point. It doesn't have to be right all the time...Love doesn't assume that others are thinking, doing and intending the worst. It gives people the benefit of the doubt. Love suffers when someone fails or when tragedy strikes. It takes no pleasure in sin or wrongdoing of any kind. It is most interested in the truth winning out, even when the truth hurts. Love lends its shoulder to bear the burdens of others...Love believes the best in people and tries hard to trust them. And when love is disappointed and crushed by bearing, believing and hoping, it endures. Three great forces motivate the church: faith, hope and love. These powerful attributes are the basis for everything the church is doing in the world today. But even when you narrow it all down...at the top of the list is love alone."

3) Thanks to Keith Woodman for this video recommendation - a powerful rendition of what Christian love is like: [This is how to love.](#)

4) Read about the love that characterized the earliest church: [Demonstrating the love of Christ](#)

5) Sprinkle these devotionals on Christian love throughout your week:

- [Are You Bold?](#)
- [The Love Mandate](#)
- [The Gospel of "I Love You!"](#)
- [So That](#)