**Livin’ the Life**

**What Characterizes Love for Jesus**

**John 14:15-24**

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David Taylor

We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises us. Today we are looking at 14:15-24 which is part of a larger section, chapters 13-17, where Jesus is teaching his disciples how to follow him after his death. There are three themes in 14:15-24, love for Jesus, promises given to those who love Jesus, and the disciples are contrasted with the world. We only have time to look at the first, What Characterizes a Love for Jesus.

In the span of ten verses, Jesus says four times, if you love me, you will obey me (15, 21, 23, 24). Four times he links love with obedience which is consistent with what Jesus says elsewhere in Johns Gospel (8:30-31; 15:10,14). Obedience is not optional for disciples/Christians. This is because believing in or loving Jesus is transformational. You cannot believe in Jesus and not be transformed. I will explain that further in a bit. We live in a time when it is acceptable and even popular that one can believe in Jesus and love Jesus yet not obey him, to disregard his commands. Jesus here is saying that those who come to faith in him, who trust him, who love him will obey him. Obedience characterizes those who love Jesus, though we do it imperfectly and often with a struggle. The apostles themselves are described as having hard hearts (Mark 6:52), they abandoned him when he was arrested (Mat 26:56), and Peter even denied him (Mat 26:69-75). But their failure is met with grieving and repentance and returning to Jesus. Jesus tell us four times that those who love Jesus obey him because he is serious about this truth, we need to hear it and take notice.

So, I want us to look today at what it means to love J and then what it means to obey Jesus’ commandments and words. First, what does it mean to love Jesus? The first thing we see here is that love for Jesus produces obedience but is not synonymous with obedience. Look at verse twenty-one, whoever has (knows) my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. Love precedes and produces obedience. Loving Jesus leads to obeying Jesus. Loving Jesus is the root of obedience while obedience is the is the fruit of love. The person who genuinely loves Jesus, as a result or a consequence of that love will obey all that Jesus has commanded. Jesus reinforces his point by giving a contrast, whoever does not love me does not keep my words (24). The answer to your sin is not primarily trying to stop sinning but loving Jesus.

Next love for Jesus is different and distinct from his love for us. Jesus’ love for us is in spite of our moral flaws and sinfulness. But Jesus is morally flawless and sinless. So, we cannot love him the way he loves us. His love overcomes the obstacles of our sin – our unbelief, our disinterest in him, and our moral ugliness. In contrast, we love him *because*he is without sin, *because*he is glorious and beautiful and completely lovely. Jesus deserves the love we show him. But we don’t deserve the love he shows us. Our love for Jesus is rooted in our need for him to overcome our sinfulness. Our love for Jesus is the response of our hearts and minds and affections to his beauty and holiness and greatness and glory. We don’t love him because he needs it. We don’t love him in response to some defect or deficiency in him. We love him because he is free from all defects and deficiencies. We love him because he is morally and spiritually and in every other way perfect and whole. Our love for Jesus is based upon our need for him and longs to be filled and satisfied with Jesus. And it is this being filled and satisfied with Jesus that transforms us and empowers us to obey him (1 Peter 1:8).

Third, our love for Jesus creates a desire to follow Jesus out of delight not duty. We say we love someone or something because we desire them/it, we crave it, long for it, want it, and prefer it. None of us are ever forced to love someone or something, we are attracted and drawn to those things we love and crave because we find joy and satisfaction in them/it (3:19-20; 12:42-43). Do you desire Jesus and crave for more of Jesus and long to see him and know him and enjoy him above everything else? To answer that requires we honestly look at our lives – what draws the attention our mind and thoughts, where do our hearts go when we are not preoccupied. How do we use our free time? So then if we love Jesus we will obey his commands or words.

The next thing we need to consider is what does Jesus mean by keeping or obeying his commandments or word? In short, obeying Jesus’ commandments/words means obeying the whole moral law of God (Gal 6:2; Rom 13:8-10). Obeying Jesus is not mustering up our own self will or just choosing to do it but relying on Jesus to change and empower us to obey him. The central issue for all of us is not specific sins but more importantly Sin. The answer for all of us is to come to Jesus in faith, to love him by finding our joy and satisfaction in Him. What does that look like? We must engage God’s word by allowing it to lead us, influence our thinking, our desires, and our actions. Get into his word until his word gets into you and works in you. Then we must ask him to change our desires as we identify wrong desires. But that is not enough. We must also be in accountable relationships where we can confess our sins to one another and encourage one another. You will never overcome persistent sins alone. We all need the help of others. Obeying Jesus is freedom not bondage because we become who we are truly meant to be, created in the image of God as his children. God did not come to save your soul, he came to create a whole new humanity that will dwell in a new creation. As we follow Jesus, God undoes the damage and twistedness of our fallenness so that we become like him. True freedom is the freedom from wrongful desires, the cravings of/for sin.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What is the answer to our discouragement, when things don’t go the way we want?
2. What does it mean to love Jesus?
3. How is Jesus love for us different than our love for him?
4. What is the relationship between our love for Jesus and our obedience to Jesus?
5. What others loves in your life trump your love for Jesus?
6. How can you change the desires of your heart?
7. What is the difference between reading your bible and engaging your bible?