

Irresistible
A New Command
John 13:31-38
October 6, 2019

For the past several weeks we've been looking at what we can do to make the message of Jesus more and more irresistible to a world that sees church and Christians and the Bible as highly resistible. If you missed any of these messages I want to encourage you to go to our website and watch the messages from the past few weeks. The statistics concerning the faith are scary for those of us in the church but, for those outside the church – they're saying things like...didn't you see this coming. Didn't you think that you would need to adjust your approach to helping people find Jesus? Didn't you believe that at some point, change was inevitable? Unfortunately, the Church has consistently been about 20 years behind the times at best and constantly playing catch-up. We've been looking at how the American Church got where it's at today and some of the things that happened that make people today see the faith and the church as resistible.

This series is also going to help us look at some of the things we can do to correct the situation the Church is in today and to become a place where the Christian faith is once again – irresistible. The desire of this assembly is to *be a place where families are supported and uplifted, the community is strengthened and encouraged, and the message of Jesus is spread throughout the world* by believers who are convicted and convinced about the saving love of Jesus Christ. And we have been doing many of those things over the past year and a half. We have set new priorities, changed plans around, made strategic hires, opened ourselves up to new possibilities, discovered the needs in our neighborhoods, and built classrooms in Sierra Leone, West Africa for children most of us will never meet.

So, why would we do any of those things and maybe a better question is this...what are we going to do next? On a night, 2000 years ago, one of the 12 disciples left the room where Jesus was having dinner. The departure of Judas signaled the beginning of a something new. The old was about to be finalized and the new would be brought in – in a way no one would forget. We still set our calendars to the events of the next hours and days because it marked the start of a whole new world.

Jesus called a huddle of the 11 who were left and said something that must have boggled their mind. One of those disciples, a guy named John, recorded what was said. Look at John 13: ³⁴ *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.* ³⁵ *Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.* Jesus does something that no one had ever done or would have been crazy enough to do...unless you were God. Jesus creates a New Commandment. He had clearly stated that of the 10 that already existed – there were two that were primary: love God and love your neighbor. So, why a new commandment? Only God can add a commandment. And to this group of disciples Jesus had proved that he was the Messiah, Emmanuel – God with us. But, weren't the two sufficient?

As it turns out, Jesus is doing something far more radical than just adding a commandment to the already existing list. **Jesus made love a verb...an action word.** And then he used the imperative form and turned the act of loving into a command to love by doing as in – hey, go love that person...go do loving things. Jesus command goes beyond love as a feeling...he was commanding them to do something. But, he doesn't stop there. He pushes them to a level of love that was unthinkable. And perhaps if we love like Jesus asks us to love, it might become irresistible. Here's what he said that was so radical...love one another like I love you. That's my paraphrase. John records it like this: *Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.* They must have looked at each other as they remembered how Jesus called them from the places they were to follow him, as they remembered how he calmed the seas, how he taught them, encouraged them, put up with them.

Jesus was reducing everything down to this single action, love one another – as I loved you. He took the Big 10 and put them all into one statement that would cover every one of them. **If you love Jesus then you will love like he loved**...how he loved God, his parents, the outcasts, the sinners, the broken, the sick, the liars, the rich, the poor – especially the poor. He was reminding them of all they had seen him do. And then he called them to love just like that. But, that wasn't all...he would show them the ultimate love for them the next day when they would beat him, convict him and crucify him. He was calling them to love just like that. They saw his sacrifices before but, he would call them to a whole other level of love. They heard him talk about giving ones life for a friend but, he would show them just what that meant as he hung on that cross in the scorching Jerusalem sun. He would assign his mother to the care of John as an act of love. He would forgive his enemies and those Roman soldiers because of love.

His objective was to make the salvation of the world irresistible by asking his followers to do something no other religion, not even Judaism had required...to love in such a way that others would know how much God loves them by experiencing the love of Jesus that was being passed on by those who had been on the receiving end of that irresistible love. Having been loved and seen the love of Jesus – he told them to go and love others the same way.

Now notice something, they were not to love for their sakes or to make them feel good or to give them a place of honor or to make them proud because they walked with Jesus. Their love was not tethered to fear or obligation or even dedication. They were to love others – look at verse ³⁵ ***Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.***” This commandment was his way of making sure that others would come to know him and in turn...be saved.

We love so that other people get to know Jesus and in turn, be saved.

The shift was now complete. The focus of our devotion and our love for God would become evident in how we love others. The vertical relationship of the Old Covenant was now to grow legs in our horizontal relationships. The New Covenant would not be about the make-your-hands-clean holiness but, of getting into the mess with real people so that others could see and experience the love of Jesus.

Jesus didn't say you had to do this because I said so. He didn't throw around the authority that was clearly his as the King of the world. Instead, he anchored this command to his own sacrifice for us. Why should his followers obey this command...because he loved us first, he loved us best. He loved in such a way that it took their breath away and it ultimately took his breath away too.

But, it didn't stop there...instead of dying and pronouncing that "I'm outta here" like we do when we leave work for a week of vacation – instead of that he came back. After being dead for three days he came back to love us all the way into heaven. He established an all-encompassing directive for his new covenant, this new movement...love all of the one another's.

Communion.