

***Christian Women's Retreat***  
**Olympia Village, Oconomowoc, WI**  
**Sunday, March 29, 2009 John 15:12**

*Surely it is God who saves us. We will trust in him and not be afraid. For the LORD is our stronghold and our sure defense. He will be our Savior! Amen!*

Jesus said: **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Do you have guilt? Ask a silly question? There are – I understand – places on the Internet where you can confess – anonymously – the things that make you feel guilty. What makes you feel guilty? If the truth be told – would the list be shorter if I asked you what doesn't make you feel guilty? Do you wake up in the morning – afraid to look at yourself in the mirror? We are thinking about putting dimmer switches in our bathrooms – so we don't have the light completely bright – all at once! Do you look at yourself in the mirror and feel guilty that you aren't the beautiful young woman you used to be? Do you feel guilty about the wrinkles that are everywhere – the little eye kripies in the corner of your eyes – the little dried drool beside your mouth – the wrinkles that are everywhere – the little red lines in the sclera – what's supposed to be the white of your eyes – that looks like a county highway map. Do you feel guilty that your teeth aren't all so white they fairly twinkle in the light? And your hair – do you see the women in those shampoo commercials? They have that hair – where they shake their head – and it just cascades around them! Women in commercials – the Victoria's Secret commercials? Do you think any of those ladies ever had a baby in their tummy? Ah, babies! There's more guilt! Little people that grow inside your tummy – and then – when they are ready – they come pushing their way out – where it's so bright, so cold, so hard, so loud, so *everything* they cry out! They were safe. You could keep them safe inside! Remember how you used to rub your tummy and talk to them? And now they are outside – and how are you supposed to keep them safe from all the dangers out there? And sometimes – in spite of your best efforts they get hurt. Sometimes it's just a little bump and you kiss it – literally – and you hold them tight – and you comfort them – and they stop crying. But sometimes they get hurt – really hurt – and there are scars – physical scars that remind you again and again – they got hurt – and where were you? Why weren't you watching better? Sometimes it's guilt from your husband – the one you grew up thinking would be the knight in shining armor – that would come and take you off into the sunset where you would live happily ever after. And the reality is – it was anything but happy. Maybe it was so terrible – so awful – so intolerable – that you ended up getting a divorce – and that really makes you feel guilty. Like that was the ultimate failure! Or maybe it was that one time you were actually physically unfaithful. Or the time you had a baby in your tummy and you weren't married – and so you did the unthinkable – because to tell your family that you had a baby in your tummy would have been unbearable. And that guilt comes to haunt you every day – or every night – when you close your eyes – and everybody in your house falls asleep – and you can't – because you are so ashamed – the tears burn on your cheeks – silently – so nobody else knows! Maybe you feel guilty because you don't want to meet a guy and get married and have 2.8 kids – and everybody in your family acts like there is something wrong with you. And maybe – just maybe – you sometimes have



thoughts that go in terrible directions – and you know they are wrong – but that’s what you do! It is my happy pleasure to tell you one more time – no matter what you have been – no matter what you have become – no matter what you have done – Jesus loves you with an unconditional love that will never fail. You have been clothed with Christ. You are forgiven! That’s the message from God’s Word today:

### **Jesus Loves You!**

That’s **I. Why we love one another**

and that’s **II. How we will love one another!**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on this morning – is just part of all the things Jesus said to his disciples the night he was betrayed. John chapter 13 says, **“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.”** Jesus would show them – again and again – in the most concrete ways – how much he loved them. Jesus took off his coat – wrapped a towel around his waist – literally got down on his hands and knees – and washed his disciples’ feet! What a lowly job – to wash their sweaty, smelly, dirty, blistered – even bloody feet! What a lowly job – not just for the teacher to wash the feet of his students! What a lowly job for the Son of God – the almighty, eternal and holy Son of God – to wash the feet of fishermen, a tax collector – political zealots! First Jesus washes their feet – and soon – very soon – he will wash their hearts and souls – when he dies on the cross! John chapter 14 – Jesus – who is about to suffer unspeakable torture and pain – because of our sins – works to comfort his disciples. The One – who is going to suffer the very hurt of hell – is concerned to comfort his disciples! Jesus tells them, **“Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”** Thomas said to him, **“Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”** Jesus answered, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Jesus comforts his disciples even more. Jesus said, **“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”** And again Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** Again and again – Jesus tells you who worry not so much about yourselves – as about everyone you love – do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Don’t be scared! Jesus will take care of you. And Jesus will take care of everyone you love. It is in the light of Jesus’ forgiving love that you have the motivation and the ability to love each other.

Jesus said--**“Love each other as I have loved you.”** Jesus loves you with an unconditional forgiving love. This is not a love to be taken for granted – nor abused! I haven’t watched very many of those little videos on the Internet. But I did watch one the other day. It was only a few seconds. It showed a soccer team that had just scored a goal. The whole team – including their goalie went over to the sidelines – in front of their fans to do this little line dance. They all ran over to the side – and started to do this little dance – complete with coordinated hand motions. It was about in the middle of this little celebration – that someone realized the official had just plunked the soccer ball down in the middle of the field and blown the whistle to resume play. The other team – very quickly – very efficiently – very carefully worked the ball to the opposition goal – and long before the goalie was anywhere near the goal fired a shot – deep into the net! Ha! No time for dinking around – they quickly went back on

defense! Know what I mean? The victory has already been won. Jesus squashed the serpent's head for you and for me—once for all for certain and for good! That is not a reason for us to be overconfident or reckless. We need to pay attention all the time. It's when we aren't ready that the devil is sure to attack!

Jesus said, **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."** How much does Jesus love us? Enough to die for us. Jesus died and rose again to save us. If you remember that—it will fill you with a joy and peace and contentment that is sure to change you. Remember that air plane that landed—crash landed in the Hudson River in New York? They say—when the plane came to rest in that water—when all the people on that plane realized the plane was not going to break into a whole bunch of pieces that would quickly fill with water and sink to the bottom. But that rather—by the grace of God—the whole plane was floating—the people very carefully unbuckled their seat belts—and very carefully climbed out of the plane—and very carefully stood on the wings. Everybody—that is—except one man—who was so excited to be safe out on the wing—he started to dance! He quite literally started to dance on the wing—he was so happy to be safe and whole! Do you suppose people around him started to dance too? Or do you think they told him, "Stop that! Stop that dancing!" And then he could tell them—"We are all safe—and we're going to be rescued! There are little boats of every kind—all coming toward us to pick us up! We are all safe! Celebrate with me!" There are in this world—way too many people being worried, anxious and afraid. And there are far too few who are celebrating that we are safe—eternally and forever safe in Jesus' nail-marked hands!

**"Love each other as I have loved you."** If you get married—and there is no where in the Bible that says you must. But if you get married--this whole **love each other** thing becomes much more complicated. God's Word makes it very clear—the responsibility the LORD gives to husbands. God's Word says, **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church!** This is all about roles and responsibilities. It's pretty simple. Husbands are supposed to love their wife—like Jesus loves us. That means unconditional complete--forgiving love—from the heart! Jesus is setting the bar exceedingly high. Husbands—love your wife like Jesus loves us. That's a love that's willing to die for you. Now—it might be tempting to say—the odds of having to make a decision—where the husband dies to save his wife—isn't very likely. But if you stop and think about it—it could very well happen. I heard just the other day—about sisters—in a car—skidding toward a telephone pole. The sister who was driving could not avoid hitting the pole. The best she could do was move the car a little one way or the other. They say—those who are often the first on the scene of terrible accidents—that there is an expression—frozen on the face of the people who lose their lives. There was an expression on the face of the sister who was driving—one of serene peace as she had steered the pole on to her side! Love like Jesus for the Church—is Hoops and Yoyo cards and flowers and chocolates—plus—not burping at the supper table and worse. It's not telling stories at parties—to be funny at the expense of your wife. It's a thoughtfulness and tenderness born of strength and self-control—that glorifies Jesus—and is a blessing to the young men and women who grow up in that home! When

husbands begin to love their wife like Christ loved the Church – then houses are truly homes – warmed by Jesus’ forgiving love – not just on Valentine’s Day and Sweetest Day and birthdays and anniversaries and Christmas – but all year long!

**“Love each other as I have loved you.”** Do you feel guilty? Do you feel guilty that you have been here – at this very nice resort – having snootie coffees and fermented grain beverages and very nice beverages with little pieces of fruit or olives in them – and very nice meals that you don’t have to plan – and don’t have to cook – and don’t have to clean up after – while your husband is back at home – ordering pizza and trying to make mac and cheese and probably burning it. And the children are crying and the house will be a mess – when you get home? Do you feel guilty after meeting people that have read all the *Oprah* books – and can design and decorate and cook like *Martha Stewart* – and have perfect fingernails – with little spring tulips painted on them – and don’t need to wear make-up and you just want to *hate them* – but you know that *that* would be a sin? Do you feel guilty about all the mistakes you have made in the past? Or do you know – in your heart of hearts – that Jesus loves you very very much! And because Jesus loves you – it wouldn’t be wrong to love yourself. And when you love yourself – you will also love the people all around you. You will love and forgive your mother-in-law who always and only seems to delight in giving you grief – tearing you down and complaining about everything you do! The more and more Jesus’ love fills our hearts – the more we will be empowered by the gospel – to love each other for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

May the Holy Spirit – enable you to do to the glory of God – what he expects – to love justice and to show mercy and to walk humbly with your God – till you see Jesus face to face. Amen!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz