

Fil-Am Community Church

LOVING LIKE JESUS LOVES ME

40 Days of Love – Part 2

13 March 2011

Pastor Rolly Estabillo

Good morning Fil-Am! It's Part two of 40 Days of Love. I'm glad you're still here and I'm looking forward to our time together for the next five weeks learning how to love. ***So, let me say that we're having a love affair. Ok?***

You know, the best way to learn anything is to learn by a model. When we see somebody else doing it and go, "Oh, that's how you do it! I've got that!" We always learn faster, quicker and deeper when somebody gives us an example. Who is the best example for love? **It's Jesus Christ.** Jesus was the only person with perfect love, with perfect understanding of relationships.

In John 13 Jesus said, *"I'm giving you a new commandment; love each other in the same way that I have loved you."* Circle "in the same way." Jesus says the way that I have modeled for you, the way that I have loved you I want you to pass that on to other people. I'm the model and the way that I love you is the way I want you to love other people. ***John 13:15*** *"I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."*

You can't fully understand how to love other people until first you understand how much God loves you. You cannot offer to other people what you don't possess yourself. You can't be gracious to others if you haven't felt God's grace. You can't be merciful to others if you haven't felt God's mercy. You can't be loving to others unless you understand how much God loves you. When you get that, when you feel it, when you understand the incredible, audacious, indescribable love that God has for you and you feel it in your life,

then you're going to be a whole lot more loving of other people. It's going to be a whole lot easier for you to love other people.

Today we're going to do two things. Number one, we're going to look at how much God really does love you and I really want you to experience this today. Then second we're going to look at how God wants you to pass it on to other people.

Let's get right into it. We're going to look at three ways that Jesus loves you.

1. First, I must accept others the way Jesus accepts me.

Followers of Jesus ought to be the most accepting people in the world. The fact is the deepest wounds you've ever had in your life are the wounds of rejection. Those are the things that hurt you the most. When somebody's put you down. Maybe you've been betrayed. Maybe you've been belittled. Maybe you've been told that you were worthless or not worth anything or you're never going to amount to anything. In those deep wounds of rejection are your deepest hurts.

We've all had them. We've had them from parents. You've had them from peers on the playground. You've had them from partners. You may have had them from a former spouse. You've had them from professionals in your career. Everybody experiences rejection in life. We spend most of our lives trying to avoid it.

In fact, most of what you do is a combination of trying to be accepted by other people and trying to avoid rejection. It affects the kind of clothes you wear – you don't want to be rejected. It affects the way you style your hair. It affects the kind of car you drive, the career you choose, how you relate to other people – everything in your life is touched in some way by the fear of 'I don't want to be rejected' and the desire of 'I want to be accepted.'

In fact, people will do crazy, crazy things in order to be accepted. Have you noticed this? Remember when you were a kid and you were dared to do something you really didn't want to do, but you also wanted to fit in? They'd say "I dare you to do this."

And you really didn't want to do it but more than anything else you didn't want to be rejected. You wanted to be accepted. You wanted to be in the group. So you did it anyway.

There is this myth out there that if I could just be perfect then everybody would love me. If I could just be perfect, if I never did anything wrong, even if I am imperfect if I don't show any imperfections, then everybody's going to love me and nobody's going to reject me and everybody's going to accept me.

Friends, that's just wrong. **Jesus was perfect and they nailed him to a cross.** No matter what you do, I hate to tell you this, but somebody's not going to like you. No matter what you do, somebody's going to disagree. Somebody is going to reject you.

So the starting point in learning to love other people is you have to realize how much God accepts you.

How does Jesus love you? John 6 "*The Father gives me my people. Every one of them will come to me, and I will always accept them.*" Circle "always". That means all the time. Jesus says I will always, always, always accept them. It's not a conditional acceptance. He says I will always accept you.

Here at church we talk a lot about accepting Jesus. You've probably heard this phrase "Have you accepted Jesus?" Maybe you've done that. Maybe you've accepted Jesus into your life.

But have you ever realized that he's accepted you? You can be a Christian; you can be a follower of Jesus all your life and never really feel accepted by God. You feel like God's always putting you down, that God's always blaming you that God's always on your case. That no matter what you do it's not good enough.

Where that comes from is not from God. It comes from un-pleasable parents. Or from cruel teachers. Or just from inconsiderate people around you. But God says, no, I just love you, period!

I don't love you because of who you are but because of who I am. Not because of what you do, but because of what I've done. Not because of your conduct, but because of my character.

So we have to learn to love the way that God loves us. God says, I love you unconditionally. I will always accept you.

The Bible says this *"Even if my mother and father forsake me the Lord will receive me."* That's how much God loves you. He says I'm going to accept you no matter what. In fact, look at how he does it.

Titus 3:7 *"Jesus treated us much better than we deserve. He made us acceptable. He made us acceptable to God and he gave us the hope of eternal life."* How does he make us acceptable? By his grace. He just says, **"You're acceptable."** It's not that you changed. It's not that you got any better. It's not that you are perfect. It's not that you never sin. No, you're going to sin the rest of your life. Jesus just says I'm going to make you acceptable by my grace. It's not based on performance.

God wants you to do that with other people but one of the problems is most people don't know the difference between acceptance and approval. Very, very different. Jesus Christ accepts you completely. He loves you and accepts you. That doesn't mean he approves of everything you do. No, he doesn't do that. But he accepts you.

You can accept someone without approving of what they do. Without approving of their lifestyle, without approving of the way they're living.

A good example is one day Jesus was walking down the street and some religious leaders who were trying to trap Jesus caught this woman in the act of adultery. It's interesting they didn't catch the guy. Usually, it seems like there's two. Maybe it was different two thousand years ago but it usually takes two. But it says they caught *the woman* in the act of adultery.

They bring her before Jesus and throw her down before Jesus. This woman was caught cheating on her husband. What are you going to do about it, Jesus?

You know this famous story. Jesus looks at all of the accusers and says, "Ok, anybody who has never sinned, you get to throw the first stone." And of course they all start going away.

What is Jesus doing here? He's giving acceptance, not approval. He didn't approve of what she was doing. The first thing that Jesus did was he defended her dignity. He said, I'm not going to let anybody treat a woman like that. I don't care what she's done. They all leave. He defends her dignity.

Which, by the way, when you come to Jesus Christ and you've got messed up in your life, you've got sins and faults and failures and mistakes he's not going to go, "See? I told you so." He's going to defend your dignity. He accepts you.

Then in the private one on one moment after everybody's gone in a personal moment with Jesus, he looks at this woman and says, "Where are your attackers?" And she says, "They're all gone, Lord." He says, "*Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.*"

That's it? That's all he's going to say? He says I don't condemn you either just don't do it any more. If it had been me I'd pull out my eight-point sermon on adultery. Let me tell you why you're evil, wicked, mean, bad and nasty. You shouldn't do this. It hurt you, it hurt him, it hurt them, it hurt the kids.

You know what I've discovered? You don't have to make people feel guilty. That's why we don't waste any time here at Fil-Am trying to make people feel guilty. Why? Because we already do. ***I don't measure up to my own standards, much less God's.***

So when you come to Jesus with all your sins and your mistakes and your faults and your failures he doesn't go, "Yeah, right." No, he defends your dignity and then he says, "Don't do that anymore." That's it. He doesn't go in and pound you into the ground. As we said last week, love doesn't rub it in, love rubs it out. So Jesus didn't approve of what she had been doing. But he did accept her.

That's what you need to do with other people around you. You don't have to go around approving of everything, everybody does. I don't even approve of everything I do. But you do have to accept them, because that is a mark of love.

The Bible says that God chose to accept us. He *chose* to accept us and make us acceptable to God.

Here's the point. ***What God does for you, he expects you to do for other people.*** God says I accept you unconditionally. I don't approve of everything you do but I accept you

unconditionally and I love you. And God says I want you to do that with everybody in your life. **Romans 15:7** “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.” He says you are to do for other people what I have done for you.

How do you do that? One of the ways you can show acceptance to other people is to **listen to them**. And another way you can show it is to look at them. You see, the highest form of love is focused attention. When I look you in the face, eye to eye, I’m saying, **you matter to me**. You are valuable to me. It’s like the little child that says, “Look me in the face, daddy!”

When you give your attention, love looks and love listens. When somebody comes in and drops something off at your desk and you don’t say anything you don’t pay any attention to it, when somebody serves you something at a fast food or the waitress comes to deliver it and you don’t look them in the eye and say, “Thank you.” You are saying you don’t value them. I don’t value you.

You’re not important to me. What you’re saying when you look them in the eye and you listen, then you’re paying attention. You are accepting them.

During 40 Days of Love we’re going to work on this stuff together. I told you, we’re going to teach you the habits of the heart and the skills for genuine loving. Here’s our homework for week number two: practicing love. The first action step says “This week I will show acceptance to...” I want you to write in the name of somebody specific. Somebody who really irritates you. Don’t look at them now. Someone in the family would be a good start but if not, perhaps, someone in the office or in school. They just get in your nerves. You don’t want to see them or talk to them. You avoid them like the plague.

These are EGR people – **Extra Grace Required**. Write that person’s name down. The most unlovely person you know. The most unlovely people are unloved people. They need doses of love.

This week when we work on love I want you to show acceptance to somebody who really irritates you or is hard to love. When you start thinking, “Lord, I don’t want to love that person!” You start thinking about how much God loves you.

Loving like Jesus means I’ve got to accept other people the way Jesus accepts me.

2. Loving like Jesus means I must value others the way Jesus values me.

How valuable are you? I’m not talking about your valuables. How much are you worth? I’m not talking about your net worth. I’m talking about your self worth. How much are you worth?

Let me tell you how worthwhile you are. You are infinitely valuable to God. First, God created you. Second, Jesus died for you. Third, he puts his Spirit within you. Fourth, he wants you to be with him forever in eternity. That’s how valuable you are to God. You are infinitely valuable to God.

Jesus said this in Luke 12 *“Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. “Even the hairs on your head have all been counted! Do not be afraid. You are worth far more than many sparrows.”* He says if God thinks sparrows are valuable, how much more valuable are you because he sent his Son to die for you.

What makes something valuable? Value depends on who made it. What’s more valuable a Picasso painting or a drawing by Rolly Estabillo? You know automatically. A Coach bag or a Target bag? No comparison.

So who created you? God did. God created you. What does that mean? **It means you're valuable.**

“Everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving.” God doesn't create junk. God created you and you're not junk. You are *good!*

“For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.” In other words before you were born God planned out what he wanted you to do with your life. He said you're my masterpiece and you're exactly what God wants you to be.

So value depends on who made you. God made you. You're not just worthy, you're not just acceptable, you are valuable. God says that's how much I value you.

Now Jesus says I want you to treat that kind of value to everybody else that I love too. So I expect you, if you're my child, to love these people the same way I love them because I died for them, not just you.

How do you do that? **1 Peter 2:17** *“Treat everyone you meet with dignity.”* That means everybody. I looked up that word “everyone” in the Greek and you know what it means?

It means everyone!

That means there's no one you are allowed to not treat with dignity or respect. Even the people you agree with and disagree with. And like and don't like. Everyone with dignity and respect.

How do you do that? There's a number of ways. One is by not talking about people behind their backs. In short, don't gossip. Another way is to not insult or make fun of

people. Then, value other's opinions. You may sharply disagree with their opinions but allow them to express themselves. Listen to others when they speak. Don't be looking around or glancing at your watch as people talk to you. Looking them in the eye, you're saying, I respect you as a person.

So look at the second homework assignment. "This week I will affirm the value of ..." I want you to write in somebody's name there who has low self esteem, somebody that you can affirm the value of, you can affirm their value. When everybody else treats them like dirt, treats them like an outcast, treats them like they don't matter, you treat them like they do matter because they do. They matter to God.

Write down a specific name. Don't write somebody in your family because you can always do that. I'm talking about somebody outside your family. "I will show acceptance to and affirm the value of..."

Third way to love...

3. I must forgive others like Jesus forgives me.

Now we're talking about a step up in being a genuine lover. Some people think that God carries grudges. They think that God's always mad at them. They think that no matter what they do, whenever they have a problem, they think, God's getting even with me. Like something fell apart this week so "God remembers what I did three weeks, or three months or three years or thirty years ago. Now God's getting even with me. I know he's doing that."

Is that really the way God acts? No. Is that the way God really responds to us? No. God does not carry grudges. All the payment for all the stuff you've done wrong, Jesus Christ took on the cross. You don't have to pay for it. Jesus paid for it. So God says I want you to learn to forgive others.

Now, what's God really like? We grow up and we get this idea that he's up in heaven waiting to zap me for something I do wrong. But here's what he's really like. Isaiah 43:25 *"I am the God who forgives your sins and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you."* That's who God is. God is a God who wants to forgive. Who has done everything he can to forgive our sins in Christ.

So that's why God can say this *"There is therefore now **no** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* You might circle the word "no." Not a little bit of condemnation or less condemnation. There is absolutely no condemnation because of what Jesus Christ did for us. There's no condemnation but that's not at no cost by the way. The next verse in Matthew, reminds us that Jesus said, *"This is the blood of my covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin."* It came at the cost of Jesus' blood. He gave his life so that you and I can be forgiven.

Once I recognize that, that he's forgiven me, then I'm enabled, I'm strengthened to forgive other people in my life.

These next verses talk about how you and I can do that. The Bible says this in Colossians 3:13 *"You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."*

When I take a good look at myself I see the ugliness. I see the selfishness. I see the sin. But when I take a good look at God, *a good look*, I see the forgiveness that only he can give.

When I get that forgiveness in my life then I'm able to give it to other people in their lives. I'm able to forgive others because I know that Jesus has forgiven me.

So how about this one? Look at this action step. Who is there this week that you could forgive, that you could offer forgiveness to? It might be somebody who has hurt you. Somebody that you have been hurt by and you go to them and say “I’ve not talked to you for a long time. Let’s get this going again. Let’s connect again.” Or it might be somebody that you know who is just under a burden of guilt in their lives. They’re just hurting. You just need to let them know that God has forgiven them just like he’s forgiven all of us.

Write their name down then make plans this week to let them know about God’s forgiveness.

If you’re going to become a world class lover you have to accept people the way God accepts you, you have to value people the way God values you, you have to forgive others the way God forgives you.

Let me tell you a story.

Fred Craddock is a pastor. He tells the story of the time he was vacationing in Gaitlenburg, Tennessee. Fred and his wife were seated at a table in a restaurant and an old man came up to them and asked, “Are you folks on vacation?” “Yes,” said Fred, “and we’re having a good time.” The old man said, “So, what do you do for a living?” Fred said, “I’m a preacher.” “Oh!” said the old man. “Let me tell you a preacher story.”

He sat down by them. The old man said, “I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was. It was very, very hard on me growing up. The kids in school made fun of me. Growing up, I didn’t have any friends at all. When I walked around our little town I always felt people were staring at me and looking at me and saying, ‘I wonder who’s the father of that boy.’ I spent a lot of time by myself. I didn’t have any friends. One day a pastor came to town.

Everybody was talking about how good he was. I had never gone to church but I decided I'd go to church and hear this guy. So I went. And he was good. So I kept going back. But each time I went to church I'd come in late and I'd leave early so I wouldn't have to talk to anybody. [Sounds like a lot of you.] Then one Sunday I got so caught up listening that I forgot to leave early and the service ended and the people stood up and I couldn't get out the door. Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. When I turned, that big tall pastor was standing there with his hand on my shoulder looking at me and he said, 'What's your name, son? Whose boy are you? Whose son are you?' I just shook when I heard those words and I heard that question. But before I could say anything that pastor said this, 'I know who you are. I know who your family is. You have a distinct family resemblance. You're the son of God!'" The man said, "You know, those words changed my life."

The old man got up and he left and a waitress came over a little bit later and said, "Do you know who you were talking to?" Fred said, no. She said, "That's Ben Hooper. Two time governor of Tennessee."

A man learned he was the child of God and it changed his whole direction. It changed his destiny. He learned he was valuable and acceptable and lovable and forgivable and capable. It changed the rest of his life. And all the opinions of other people didn't matter any more.

I know without a doubt you've had wounds in your life. You've been hurt, no doubt. They're wounds from rejection by peers and parents and all the other people I've talked about. God cares. I care. This church cares. You need to make Jesus Christ the most important person in your life and start filling your mind with what he says. That is the starting point for love. You can't love others until you know how much God loves you.

Ephesians 3:18 "May you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God's love really is."