

Indiscriminate Love

LK 6:27-36

She was a whore. Her life was a mess... and it hadn't gotten there overnight. This mess of a life had probably started with abuse at a young age, followed by years of bad decisions, and too many lovers to count... but not a single one had truly loved her. Not until the night she met Jesus did she begin to understand what love was. It was an expensive dinner party. She wasn't an invited guest, but the host knew her well. She snuck in and went right to Jesus... irresistibly drawn... The host began to protest, but Jesus simply let this woman do what she came to do: to wash His feet with her hot tears, and dry them with her hair. When she was done, He looked her in the eyes and said, "*Your faith has saved you! Go in peace.*" That's indiscriminate love.

The host was Simon, a leader, a man of high religious rank and esteem in society. He had likely been raised to think of himself this way by his parents, sent to the best schools, a fast-track to success charted out for him before he was out of diapers! Now he was a distinguished leader and teacher of God's people... a Pharisee, a pillar of moral purity and religious zeal. How many times had he recited the great Shema? "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.*" But there was no love in his heart for this woman... only disdain. Not until he listened to Jesus, did he begin to understand what love was... indiscriminate love.

Roughneck fisherman were drawn to it... wealthy merchants were surprised by it... lepers and outcasts were healed by it... and religious leaders couldn't figure it out. A Roman centurion was changed by it... two crucified thieves were embraced by it... indeed the whole world has not gotten over it yet... the indiscriminate love of Jesus!

We're beginning a new series today, entitled "Indiscriminate." Over the next few weeks we will be looking at Jesus: His indiscriminate love, His indiscriminate joy, His indiscriminate hope and His indiscriminate grace. But before we go any further, we've got to agree on what this word ***indiscriminate*** means.

If you look this word up, you will find some definitions that read "***indiscriminate***: aimless, arbitrary, careless, erratic, disorganized, purposeless." That is NOT what we're talking about! To say that Jesus' love is indiscriminate, doesn't mean that it's arbitrary, careless or purposeless... quite the contrary! The Bible tells us that the plan for Jesus to come and redeem humanity was in the mind of God even before creation! God knew, when He was creating the universe, and putting human beings in charge of the Garden... He knew beforehand that we would blow it... that we would color outside the lines, go our own independent way, set ourselves up as gods... and wreak total havoc upon our planet. He knew! And still His plan was already formed, that He would send His Son Jesus to reclaim us, rescue us, redeem us, and recreate us. There was nothing purposeless or careless about His love. It was planned and laser-focused from before the foundation of the earth!

If you go a little further, you'll find other synonyms for indiscriminate like: unlimited, universal, unconfined, unrestrained, panoramic, inclusive, endless, infinite... and all these are good words... they get closer to what we mean when we talk about the indiscriminate love of Jesus.

The limitless, unconfined, and unrestrained love of Jesus...

the panoramic, universal, and inclusive love of Jesus...

the reckless, unexpected, and unconditional love of Jesus?!

Yeah, now that's what we're talking about: **The indiscriminate love of Jesus.**

It's the indiscriminate love of Jesus that changed the world 2000 years ago.

It's the indiscriminate love of Jesus that can change the world today.

Can you envision a **world** ruled by love? That's beyond most of our imaginations, but...

Can you envision a **community** whose most basic value is **love** for one another and whose **mission** is to **love** the world?

That community is the **Church** of Jesus Christ, and in order for that community to work,

You and I are called to be

Indiscriminately loved by Jesus, so we can love indiscriminately like Jesus!

Let's listen to what Jesus said to his followers one sunny day...

Luke 6:27-36, NLT *"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. ³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. ³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

³² *"If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.*

³⁵ *"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."*

Love your enemies! Now, that has got to be the stupidest thing Jesus ever said... or it's one of the most profound. Love your enemies... those who curse you and hurt you and hit you, love them! And bless them! How dumb is that??? Or how deep?

If you're anything like me, we nod our heads piously when we hear Jesus say *"Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you,"* but we find ourselves **powerless** to do so. If I'm honest, my first inclination is to hate those who hate me and to avoid those who annoy me. *"Love them? Well... that's going to take more power than I've got in me. So, let's just put that on the back burner for now... I'll just be a nice person, a committed follower of Jesus, and we'll just rationalize away that loving my enemies bit."*

No. Jesus said it, and He meant it: *"Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you."* How in the world is that even possible?

We've got to look to Jesus here. He's not only our teacher, He's our best example. And the goal of the Christian life is to become more and more like Jesus, is it not? Well, I for one have a long way to go... but I'm willing to walk down this path if you are!

How did Jesus love?

Jesus was **unexpected** with His love. He didn't just love nice people. He loved mean people... He loved weak people... He loved powerful people and prideful people... He loved morally bankrupt people and people who were completely different from Him. He loved people who disagreed with Him.

Jesus was **unconditional** with His love. Jesus loved people who talked behind his back. He loved people who schemed against him. He loved Judas who betrayed Him and Peter who denied Him! He loved the people who insulted him and falsely accused Him. He loved the people who whipped him and drove him through the streets. He loved the people who nailed his hands and feet to the Cross. He loved the people who jeered and taunted Him as he died.

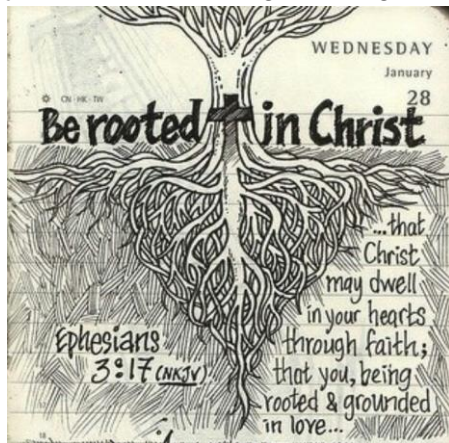
Did He condone wrong or sinful behavior? Did He just sweep it all under the rug in the name of love? No again. He loved people despite their sinful behavior... for He knew that that was His mission, to come and lay down His life as a sacrifice for those who had gone astray. His death and resurrection would be the doorway for us sinners into a whole new way of living. But the key to it all was love.

He loved His family...He loved His friends and followers...He loved sinners... and He loved His enemies. And... He loves **you** right here, right now, right where you are... just as you are... with no strings attached. He just loves you... more than you can even imagine.

I think half of our problem as people is that we really don't believe God loves us. We're afraid that somehow it's really conditional, that it depends on whether we're being good or not... that it ebbs and flows, that he capriciously bestows it and removes it according to His whims. We fail to understand the **enormous power** and **utterly unconditional** nature of God's love for us.

The Apostle Paul experienced the love of Christ intensely and prayed for us as we follow Christ. Listen to the words of his prayer:

Eph 3: 14 – 19 NLT *"When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, ¹⁵ the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. ¹⁶ I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. ¹⁷ Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. **Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.** ¹⁸ And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."*



God loves you!!! He loves you. He really, really loves you. The closer we get to Jesus, the more we trust Him, and the more we trust Him, the more we will believe His love for us! **"Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong."**

Any gardener can make plants green... just throw a bunch of nitrogen at them and they green right up! But nitrogen does nothing for the root system, and without a strong root system, a plant will not survive drought and will not bear the fruit it should. You want a strong root system for your garden? Throw potassium at your plants!

You want a strong root system for your life? Walk with Jesus daily, let Him make His home in your heart, and your roots will sink deep into the love of God... and you will begin to believe, or believe more and more, that

You are indiscriminately loved! You are loved with reckless abandon. You are loved passionately, unconditionally, and eternally. As a result, more and more, you will find yourself set free to love others... even **that** guy.

I am, as most of you know, a bit of a science nerd, and I am always amazed when I think about the Sun. I totally understand why many ancient cultures worshipped the Sun as a god! It's pretty amazing! Think about it: inside the Sun, hydrogen atoms are moving with such energy that they collide together and fuse to become Helium atoms, and in that process release more energy than we can possibly imagine! That energy then travels **93 million miles** to reach our little planet, and we experience it as light and heat. There's nothing better than seeing the sun break through on a chilly spring day. Instantly, everything is brighter! We begin to feel its warmth and it feels so good. Our dispositions even change from sullen and angry winter people to happy and hopeful summer people!

The light and heat from the Sun change everything! And the Sun is always there, always shining... even when it's cloudy and raining, the Sun still shines. Even at night, the Sun shines on another part of our globe. Now we know that the Sun has a lifespan, but we're talking billions of years here, so for all intents and purposes, as far as we're concerned, the Sun shines all the time everywhere... it never stops.

Maybe that's why Jesus is called "*the Sunrise from on high!*" His love never stops. His Love changes everything. His love brings light and warmth... his love brings life.

Eph 3: 18 – 19 NLT *"And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. ¹⁹ May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully."*

Our first calling as human beings is to **experience the love of God through Jesus**. That's it... believe that God loves us and receive His love into our hearts. Sounds simple... perhaps simplistic. Yet it is the most profound experience in human existence.

Our problem with God's indiscriminate love, is that we understand **discriminate love**, like when you love someone who loves you back. We love our families and our friends... but who doesn't? Unless you are psychotic and antisocial, it's pretty easy to love someone who deserves to be loved, someone who loves you back. Discriminate love is not notable. It's not remarkable. It's not transformative.

God's indiscriminate love is.

In our heart of hearts, we know that we **don't deserve** to be loved by God. We clearly do not meet His standards of holiness and behavior. I mean, we all consider ourselves to be relatively nice people, but we have our flaws, our vices, our peccadillos... And so, no matter how many times we sing "Jesus Loves Me This I Know" with our kids, in our hearts we can doubt that He does. I mean, we know things... we've done things... And we are spiritually crippled by the thought that because of these things God cannot truly love us.

Well, it's time for us spiritual cripples to hear Jesus say to us, "*Rise and walk!*"

St Paul felt pretty unworthy of the love of God... and for good reason! I mean he had persecuted and tortured and even killed Christians in his former life. But listen to his settled conviction:

Rom 8:38 – 39 NLT *"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

You are loved by God! Truly loved by Him, **totally** loved by Him. He has your best in mind and when He thinks of **you**, He smiles. Imagine that! You cannot be separated from God's love! Nothing you do will cause God to love you any less. What's it going to take to believe that, to internalize that, to make that the bedrock upon which our lives are built? This is the most powerful truth in the Bible, my friends.

John 3:16 NLT *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*

You and I are called to be

Indiscriminately loved by Jesus, so we can love indiscriminately like Jesus!

You've heard it said that hurt people hurt others. Well the converse is also true: loved people love others.

This is where the magic happens: when we personally experience the indiscriminate love of Christ, when our roots are sunk deep into His love and total acceptance, that changes us! We are not the same... the Bible calls it **re-creation**. We are re-created more and more to become like Christ.

2 Cor 5:17 ESV *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

When a person has begun to believe the love of God and has responded to His invitation into relationship, that person is re-created more and more to become like Christ. And here's the thing: the more we become like Christ, the more we begin to love like Christ. Indiscriminately.

And that, my friends, is **terrifying**.

How is it terrifying? It's terrifying first, because it's my level of indiscriminate love that shows me how closely I am really walking with Christ! People tend to measure spiritual maturity by things like how much

of the Bible someone has memorized, or how theological they are, or how diligently they serve. And none of these things are necessarily bad (though many can lead to pride). The problem is, God isn't particularly impressed by those things... if He was, we'd all be Pharisees! What God is looking at, is our love for others. Jesus said, **JN 13:35 ESV** *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Jesus said, *"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and **you will truly be acting as children of the Most High**, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be **compassionate**, just as your **Father** is compassionate."*

So, I find this indiscriminate love thing terrifying because I am obviously not loving anywhere near as indiscriminately as I ought to. And it shows me that even though God loves me totally, I have a long way to go. But that's OK because it's Christ at work in me, recreating me, softening my heart, opening it up, making it more like the heart of Jesus.

Secondly, it's terrifying, because it means I have to love everybody. Indiscriminately. No exceptions. And I don't know about you, but I'd like to have a list of exceptions, you know, ten people I don't have to love... or one certain type of person that I don't have to love. But indiscriminate love doesn't get to pick & choose. Remember?

The limitless, unconfined, and unrestrained love of Jesus...
the panoramic, universal, and inclusive love of Jesus...
the reckless, unexpected, and unconditional love of Jesus?!

The indiscriminate love of Jesus.

You know, I'm pretty happy when it's Jesus doing the loving... you know, loving everyone in the New Testament... loving the farmers and the Pharisees, the housewives and the harlots, loving the lame and the lepers, the rich and the poor, the humble and the proud, the truthful and the dishonest... loving those who followed Him and those who hated Him. I'm cool with Jesus loving all those people.

But if that's what I'm called to do, I'm terrified, and you should be too! For to love indiscriminately means to desire and work for the best for a few people who are real snobs and jerks at work. I'm called to love and go out of my way for people who believe very differently politically than I do... people who say and write things I consider despicable. People who live lifestyles that I find morally repugnant.

"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also."

That is indiscriminate love, and it is terrifying. It brings me to my knees. I know that I don't have that kind of love for my enemies and people who are very different from me. I wish I did...but I find that my heart way too often fills with judgment, and anger, and annoyance, even disgust. And that it is far less often filled with the love and compassion that should mark me as a child of God.

"Then ... you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."

So yeah, it brings me to my knees, asking God to continue His work in me... to continue to soften my crusty heart... to open myself more to His love and to loving others.

I want you to know how high a calling there is on our lives: You and I are called to be **Indiscriminately loved by Jesus, so we can love indiscriminately like Jesus!** Imagine what that might look like!

When we are so secure in the love of God that we truly live with open hearts and open hands to those around us.

When people will be drawn to the church because it is known not for its judgment and exclusivity, but as a community of love, a refuge, a safe place.

If we, the children of God, would learn to love indiscriminately like Jesus did, there is no limit to the impact that would have. It would be intensely local... it would be contagiously global. And wherever it was, it would be transformational.

Here's the challenge then:

First, to believe and receive the love of Christ. This is square one, and it's a square I find I have to keep coming back to time after time. God loves you! He knows you inside out and He loves you period! He loves you so much that when you were lost in life, stuck in sin, and far away from God, He came on a rescue mission, to seek you, and find you, and bring you home into His family. Have you experienced that kind of love yet?

The second challenge is to indiscriminately love like Jesus did. There are lots of people you already love or at least like. But what about **that guy**... or **that woman**? They just rub you the wrong way. You dislike their personalities, you disagree with their political views, you are bothered by their terrible work ethic, or their boasting, or whatever. Do you love them too? What can you do to show your love for the people you don't necessarily even like?

No easy answers here! Gee, you were probably coming here today hoping I'd just say a few nice words and give you a little motto to live by. You didn't know that I came here today to cause problems!

I think we'd better pray at this point. I mean you don't really need me to tell you what it looks like to love someone. You're compassionate towards them, you pray for them, you speak kindly to them, you go out of your way to make them feel special. Yeah... all that. Show the world God's amazing love is true! Go love your enemies!

Let's pray!