

✠ John 14:15-21 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

The one who has and keeps the commands of Jesus is the one who loves Jesus.

Here is the command of Jesus: “Believe in Me. Believe that I am the One sent by the Father to ransom you from your sins. Believe that I reconcile the world to My Father by My blood. Believe that I am He who has all authority in heaven and on earth. Believe that I am the Son of God, the Son of Mary, sent by the Father to save you from sin, death, and the devil.”

That is the command of Jesus. Whoever obeys this command to believe loves Jesus. Whoever does not obey this command, hates Jesus. He is an enemy of God. He does not walk in the light. This is the first and chief command. After it and because of it come the commands to love one another as He has loved you and to love your enemies. If you don't love Jesus you won't love one another and you certainly won't love your enemies. For to love as Jesus loves is to forsake yourself and pursue the benefit and honor of another.

It doesn't matter how much someone looks or acts like they love their neighbor, if they don't love Jesus, if they don't obey His command to believe in Him, then they don't really love their neighbor. There is no such thing as love outside of God. There are shadows of love just as there are shadows of people keeping the Law. Most people do not murder, but everyone bears hatred in his heart toward his brother or neighbor by slandering him or wishing him to be hurt in one way or another. Most people don't commit adultery, but everyone lusts. Most people don't have blatant idols, but everyone puts something before God.

In the same way, people are kind and even forgiving. But they soon take pride in the fact that they are kind and forgiving. And they are quickly offended that their kindness goes unnoticed and their forgiveness is taken advantage of so that they vow to not forgive and to display no kindness but merely seek out what they think they deserve for being such a kind person until someone treats them as they think they should be treated for all their good deed and loving efforts. In the end, their love is shallow and fleeting and they quickly forget their forgiveness and remember the grudge. Or they quickly forget their promise to love and seek their own pleasures, ripping fathers from sons, mothers from daughters, husbands from wives.

When the world loves or seems to be loving, it is really only seeking self-gain and promotion. Because true love doesn't care what the other person feels like or how good it makes people feel. True love is not concerned with being loved back or any sort of return on its investment. True love is concerned only with having a perfect relationship. And it is evident from the world around us and even in our own living rooms and kitchens that there is no such thing as a perfect relationship among the children of men.

Consider the apostle's words: Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Repent, you have not loved as Christ has loved you.

The only perfect relationship is between the Son and the Father. The Son loves the Father perfectly and so perfectly submits to the Father. And the Father perfectly loves the Son and so grants the Son's requests. The Spirit, too, perfectly loves the Father and the Son, and so obeys the Father and the Son and goes out in the name of the Son to create faith in those whom the

Father has given to the Son. There is a perfect relationship between the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is perfect love in God.

And this perfect love is given to us, the children of men. It is given by way of the cross. For there is no greater love than that one would lay down his life for a friend. Yet Jesus lay down His life for us while we were still enemies of God. He demonstrated His perfect love for His Father by becoming obedient even unto death on the cross. So, too, did He demonstrate His perfect love for you by submitting Himself to death for you that you should be His.

So that there is a perfect relationship between Him and His Bride. He seeks only her glory and honor. He presents her as a picture of perfect faithfulness and innocence, though her sins are like scarlet. He speaks of nothing but her honor and chastity, praising her by keeping her safe and unharmed and by defending her reputation when her accusers seek to slander and mock her.

Likewise, His Bride, His Church, says nothing but what He says and does nothing but what He does. She perfectly submits to His word and perfectly obeys Him. She never promotes herself above Him. She never seeks her own glory or her own riches. She is perfectly content in her Bride-groom and desires no one else. She has eyes only for Him. Her heart only desires Him.

His Spirit remains with her and dwells within her. She is flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. Between Him and her there is no darkness, there are no half-truths and white lies. There is perfect truth and perfect love and no one shall ever come between Him and His Bride. He loves her so that He laid down His life for her, sacrificing all for her sake. She loves Him so that she has passion only for Him, giving herself to no one but keeping herself for Him. She perfectly loves her Bride-groom and so keeps His commandments.

That is the way of love. It seeks only the glory and honor of the beloved. So the Church loves He who sanctifies and keeps her. She does not promote herself, but she promotes only His honor and glory by loving Him and always telling everyone about her beloved Bride-groom and how He sold all that He had to purchase her from her former, wicked master. She sings of His conquest and battle, His victory and His glory.

She loves Him and so obeys His commands, the chief of which is to believe in Him. So the Church hears His preaching and believes His words. She lives her life under the waters of Holy Baptism, awaiting the promise of her Bride-groom to come and take her to her permanent dwelling. She eats His Holy Supper, joyfully partaking of His gifts to her, basking in the wonder of His love.

Church of God, elect and glorious, holy nation, chosen race, you are called as God's own special people; royal priests and heirs of grace. Know the purpose of your calling, show to all His mighty deeds. Tell of love that has no limits; grace that meets all human need. Once you were an alien people, strangers to God's heart of love; but He brought you home in mercy, and now you are citizens of heaven. Let His love flow out to others, let them feel a Father's care, that they, too, may know His welcome and share in His countless blessings.

The Father loves you and the Son loves you and the Holy Spirit loves you, and they make their home with you, showing you the Son that you may know the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

What does this look like? Feed and care for your children. Raise them in His Word. Love your wives. Submit to your husbands. Obey the authorities. Give to those who have none. Defend those who have no father. Care for those who have no husband. Attend preaching and

His word. Eat His body, drink His blood. Confess your sins. Forgive as you have been forgiven.
Love as you have been loved.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠