Love Like Jesus – Part 4

# With All Five Senses

# (Genesis 2:18)

Good morning, welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’ve been talking about how to “Love Like Jesus”, a love with no exceptions, and today we’re going to talk about loving with all five senses. You see, Jesus always met the real-felt needs of the people he came into contact with. He was committed to bringing health, wholeness, and salvation to the whole person, and he taught us to love with all five senses.

From the very beginning, Jesus was sensitive to the needs of each man, woman, and child. The Bible gives us the account of Creation in Genesis chapter 1 and it tells us that God created day after day, each day he saw that it was good, but on the sixth day he looked over all that he had made and said,

“It was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Over and over and over again God said, “It was good.” It wasn’t until sometime later that God looked at Adam, the first man, and sensing his loneliness said,

"It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18).

And so, not only is God sensitive to our feelings, but he created us with five senses, five ways in which we’re able to observe, understand, and interact with our surroundings.

Today, I want to talk to you about loving with all five senses, not just in how you relate to God, but in how you relate to others, because loneliness is not just something that Adam experienced at the beginning of time. The reality is that even today, you can be around a lot of people and still feel very, very alone, because you’re lacking the intimacy of relationships. You can be in a very crowded place, you can be sitting in a crowded church, working around a lot of people, or in a classroom full of your peers, and still have this nagging sense of loneliness because you don’t feel like you really connect with anyone.

In our culture today, we find more and more that we’re not connecting intimately with one another; and the reality is that we’re surrounded by more people than we could ever imagine who are hurting and feel completely alone. Many of you may feel like no one really cares, that there’s no one that you can really talk to, no one you can trust, and yet we were created with this deep need for intimacy. And so, what I want to do this morning is explore five ways that we can be a part of the solution to this unmet need in our culture by following the example of Jesus and loving with all five senses.

You see, here’s what I’ve noticed, when Jesus began ministering for those 3 ½ short years before his crucifixion he always paid close attention to the real-felt needs of those he met. And so, today as we look at the ministry of Jesus we’re going to learn to love with our sense of taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight. Five senses, five ways in which we are able to observe, understand, and interact with those around us. Number one we’re going to explore the sense of taste.

## 1. Taste

Now I imagine that most of you at some time or another have tasted disappointment. You’ve been let down and betrayed by someone whom you loved; it was painful and discouraging because you loved them and trusted them. But the reality is that there is only one who is ultimately worthy of our trust and that’s why the Bible tells us,

“Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalms 34:8).

And yet, the problem is that it seems as if we always have a taste for things that are just beyond our reach, and so, we ignore the Holy Spirit’s prompting, and we allow our appetites to rule us. Now God created us with legitimate appetites, but we’re spiritually shortsighted like those the apostle Paul warned of in Philippi saying, “Their God is their stomach” and so we set our minds on earthly things. This has been our downfall from the very beginning.

In fact, in Genesis chapter 3, the first woman, named Eve (God’s solution to Adam’s loneliness), was tempted when she saw the fruit of that one tree that they were forbidden to eat from. She looked at it and saw that it was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and so disregarding what God had said, she and her husband took some and tasted it.

The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 25 that a man named Isaac, the promised son of Abraham,

“Had a taste for wild game…” (Genesis 25:28).

Just like Adam and Eve, Isaac’s taste, his appetite for wild game resulted in him being deceived. However, the real son of the promise, Jesus Christ, the one who was full of grace and truth, that descendent who would be a blessing to all nations was coming. And it was Jesus who would satisfy our appetite, because he was that living bread that came down from heaven which man may eat and not die. Jesus said,

“This bread is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

He promised that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness would be filled, that whoever drinks the water that he gives them will never again be hungry or thirsty. And so, in spite of our taste for the things of this world, God in Christ has satisfied our hunger. Like fresh bread coming out of the oven, number two we want to breathe deeply of that smell.

## 2. Smell

Now my mom was an avid birdwatcher and she found the climate in Arizona to be so appealing that she and my father decided to retire there. That desert climate provided for an amazingly diverse population of wildflowers which while not only being attractive, also gave off quite a scent attracting many varied species of birds. In the same way, just as the beauty and fragrance of flowers attract birds and insects, drawing them closer and inviting them to breathe deeply of their fragrance, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ loved us and gave himself up for us…

“As a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).

For those who believe, this fragrance of Christ is attractive, it’s appealing, but just as some people are allergic to scent of flowers, to some the fragrance of Christ may not be welcome. For some the aroma of Christ may not be the pleasant experience it was intended to be, in fact, for them it may be quite the opposite, the apostle Paul describes it this way,

“We are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

In other words, the apostle tells us that only those who believe and are saved will embrace the smell. To them it will be a fragrance of life, but to those who reject it, to those who are perishing, the message of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection is nothing but the pungent smell of death. And so, as we live our lives in this world, as followers of Christ, you might think that everyone who hears the good news about God’s forgiveness in Christ would automatically welcome the aroma of that message of hope, but it doesn’t bring about the same reaction in everyone. In fact, just a week before his death, a dinner was given in Jesus honor. John’s gospel tells us in chapter 12,

“Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Jesus. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume” (John 12:2-3).

This lavish gift of pure nard was a fragrant oil prepared from the roots and stems of an aromatic herb found in northern India, but this gift wasn’t welcomed by all those who had gathered there that day. One of Jesus disciples, Judas Iscariot objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?” And yet, this gift was an expression of Mary’s love and gratitude as she was prophetically anointing Jesus in anticipation for his burial. The challenge for us today, like it was for Mary, is to continue to worship allowing the wonderful fragrance of the gospel to emanate from us by our words and our deeds regardless of those who would object to the smell. And then, number three, we’re going to love like Jesus with our sense of touch.

## 3. Touch

Time and time again in the Bible we find people begging Jesus to touch their little children and babies. The blind and the sick are fumbling and pushing forward just hoping to touch Jesus. However, in our culture today, the context of a loving touch has been distorted by our spiritual enemy. Satan has taken and twisted something that was intended to be good and used it for evil. In fact, in America today, one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys is sexually abused. And so, many of us have been abused under the pretext of love, we’ve been touched in ways that were selfish and hurtful, and so I want to clarify that what I’m talking about here is a touch that’s welcome, it’s desired, and it’s needed, because it’s a godly, caring, sensitive, and appropriate touch.

There’s an amazing example in Matthew chapter 8, where a man with leprosy came and knelt before Jesus saying,

“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean” (Matthew 8:2).

Now, culturally this was unthinkable, this leper was extremely contagious, and from what I read the lifespan of a person with leprosy was only 10 years. And so, he was desperate, his body was decomposing, he literally looked and smelled like the walking dead, but he knew what God could do. He said, “You can make me clean.”

Watch what Jesus does in verse three, “Jesus reached out and did what? He touched the man. Jesus touches him and says,

“I am willing, be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy” (Matthew 8:3).

Now, I know this is Jesus, but this is a really good time not to be touching people, right? I mean, this man was unclean, he was incredibly contagious, and over and over and over again Jesus healed people without a touch. All he needed to do was say the word. In fact, just a couple verses ahead, a man came to Jesus asking for help because his servant was at home suffering terribly. Jesus said, “Sure, I’ll come and heal him” but the man replied in verse eight,

"Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matthew 8:8).

Jesus was astonished by this man’s great faith and he said,

"Go! It will be done just as you believed it would…” (Matthew 8:13).

Now, let’s back up a few verses, here’s this leper, he’s contagious, and so this would’ve been a really good time for Jesus to pray from a distance. You know, with just the power of his word even the dead are given life, but Jesus reaches out and touches this man. Now why would Jesus touch him? Why did Jesus reach out and touch this man?

I believe Jesus was doing something deeper, something greater than just healing a man with leprosy. You see, Jesus knew that what this man needed most was a loving, caring touch; that he needed to be healed from a life of rejection and loneliness. The thing that was causing him the greatest pain, wasn’t all the external symptoms, but the hurt deep on the inside of being an outcast, of losing his family, friends, and identity.

It was that loving touch of Jesus that healed him and it’s that touch that changes us because we were wired by God for intimacy. And so, if we’re going to love like Jesus, we want to express it with appropriate touch, maybe a hug or handshake. And then number four, we’re going to love with our sense of hearing.

## 4. Hearing

Now, as we read the Bible, we most often find Jesus teaching. In other words, he was talking, but I believe he was also a great listener. In fact, shortly after his resurrection, later that same day, the Bible tells us that there were two disciples walking down the road. Two men whose hopes had been shattered, they were discouraged and disappointed because God didn’t do what they expected him to do. You see, they’d left everything to follow Jesus. They’d put their hopes in the fact that he was the Messiah, that he was going to overthrow the Roman government, that he was going to restore God’s kingdom in Judea. But they failed to understand the cross and it’s suffering, and they didn’t recognize that Jesus was building a Heavenly Kingdom.

So, Luke tells us, these two guys are walking along, they’re depressed, discouraged, and feeling all alone when Jesus comes alongside them. The Bible says that they were kept from recognizing him, and so he’s walking with them and he asked them,

“What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:17-18).

In verse 19, instead of revealing himself, with a touch of humor Jesus asked, “What things?”

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:19-21).

And so, Jesus patiently listened as they told their rendition of what he already knew, and in doing so, he models for us how to love by listening. Not by trying to resolve their pain, not by giving them the solution to their problems, but just letting them know that he cared by listening. I believe that learning to listen is important to every healthy relationship.

Dana and I have been married for 30 years now and I’ve discovered that she doesn’t always want me to fix the problem, to offer my opinion or give her a solution, but she simply wants to talk things through, unloading what’s on her mind. Now, I’ll be honest, there are times when I have to hold my tongue, because I want to say something, but I’ve learned that the most loving thing that I can do is to just listen while she shares what’s on her heart.

And I often think of the admonition of Jesus, one of his most famous phrases, something that he said time and time again:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9).

And it’s kind of interesting when you think about it, because God gave us two ears but only one mouth. And so, I wonder if he’s suggesting that we should listen twice as much as we speak, because in another place he said, “Consider carefully how you listen” (Luke 8:18). James emphasized this saying,

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak…” (James 1:19).

And so, giving someone our undivided attention and listening can be a powerful way of loving someone. This is what Jesus modeled for us and there may be people in your life right now, who the most effective way you could love them is to simply ask them an open-ended question and listen. And finally, number five, we can love like Jesus with a sense of sight.

## 5. Sight

Jesus healed many people who were blind, lovingly ministering to them and restoring their sight, but what he did more often was that he ministered to us through our own sight. In other words, he always had time to stop and talk to people, he would look into their eyes and listen. In the 3 ½ years of his ministry on earth Jesus was always on the go, healing someone, teaching the crowds, feeding the multitudes, but he was never so busy that he couldn’t be interrupted. In fact, one time the Bible records that so many people were coming and going that Jesus and his disciples didn’t even have a chance to eat. So, Jesus said to his disciples,

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31).

They all got into a boat to get away to a solitary place, but the people seeing them leave ran ahead on foot and got to the other side ahead of them. The Bible tells us in verse 34,

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd…” notice his response, he didn’t get angry, he wasn’t frustrated, he didn’t tell them to go way, but “He had compassion on them.” And so, “He began to teach them many things, but by this time it was very late, so he told his disciples, “Give them something to eat” (Mark 6:34-37).

Another great example is when Jesus was in this house teaching and people had come from all over to hear him, and so, he’s in this place, he’s teaching, and these four guys came carrying their friend on a mat to bring him to Jesus. However, they couldn’t make their way in because of the crowd so in Luke chapter 5, verse 19, it says,

“They went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd…” (Luke 5:18-19).

And so, Jesus is teaching, he’s right in the middle of his message when they drop this man right in front of him. Notice what he does. He stops teaching and recognizing their faith says,

“Friend, your sins are forgiven” (Luke 5:20).

But he wasn’t finished, in verse 24 he said, “Oh and by the way,”

“Get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God” (Luke 5:24-25).

You see, Jesus always welcomed interruptions, a chance meeting, an opportunity to minister to someone. And so, if you and I are going to love like Jesus we need to remind ourselves that whoever drops in or drops down in front of you, that’s literally God’s assignment for you in that moment. If we could just grasp that, welcoming that opportunity, and embracing God’s will, we would find the needs of our community being met like never before, because we’d never be too busy for an interruption.

And so, we love people like Jesus by looking them in the eye and giving them our time. We want to love people with all five senses, not allowing the urgent to crowd out the important, but like Jesus said,

“Loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength….and 'Loving your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31).

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