**7/Sept/2014 The Great and Radical Revolution**

**Revolution:** a far reaching and drastic change, especially in ideas; the overthrow of a regime or political system.

**Radical:** a person who advocates fundamental political, economic and social reforms by direct and uncompromising methods; a person who holds and follows strong convictions and extreme principles; an extremist; extreme change from accepted and traditional ways.

Just over 2,000 years ago the greatest and most incredible revolution began as God sent His Son Jesus to this earth, and that revolution is still going on today. He came into this world to bring radical, dramatic and sweeping change through His life, death, resurrection; through His teachings; through His example and with the ability and empowerment found in the Holy Ghost. Jesus did not come into the world to leave things as they were, and in the last commission He gave His disciples (and you and me) a call to change the world with Him. ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ Jesus revolution was so successful it divided history into B.C. and A.D. It began with a cross and has swayed the whole world because of His great sacrifice and suffering love. This supernatural revolution Jesus started (that brings such radical change to all who engage in it) is still powerfully moving forward today. As followers of Jesus Christ we are to be His agents of this radical change. This is now our revolution and it overcomes hatred with love; violence with compassion; and lies with the truth. Jesus called us to be the salt and the light of the entire world, and if we don’t obey Him, who will? If ever there was a time to be radical for Jesus, it is today.

Jesus was revolutionary in His ministry and radical in His teachings. He questioned religious leaders of the day. He pronounced woe and judgment upon the scribes and Pharisees. He threw money-changers out of the Temple. He performed miracles and healings on the Sabbath day. He took dirt, spit on it and used it to heal a blind man. His disciples did not fast and ate without washing their hands. He turned Jewish laws and traditions upside down. He was radically different in His ministry and in His teachings, challenging humankind to follow and emulate His amazing example. Many of the teachings of Jesus have been found to be too difficult to obey; many teachings have been left untried; and many have been given up on. There are some things I wish Jesus hadn’t said, but good enough, He left the Holy Ghost to be our Helper in all things. The revolution in our lives affects us from the inside to the outside, and it begins the moment we ask Jesus into our hearts and lives. Now the changes in our thinking, in our words and our actions will begin, as we yield ourselves to His Word, His Spirit and His will. In all things we are to pray, ‘Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.’ That includes His will in our lives.

His will is found in His Word, and it doesn’t take us long to realize the drastic changes we must make in our thinking, our words and our actions. Many of these changes will not happen instantly. It will require our diligence and determination for us to succeed in obeying His commands. But when we fall down and fail, His unending love and amazing grace is there to pick us up and set our feet on solid ground once again. His teachings extend to each of us today – they must be understood and applied to our lives as we endeavor to sincerely serve Him with all our hearts, mind and strength.

This morning we want to take some time to look at the many revolutionary, radical statements Jesus made and how they can be applied to our lives.

**Revolutionary Concept #1 Jesus servant style of leadership. Luke 9:1-6**

**9:1** The 12 disciples had gathered around and were following Jesus, not by force, but by choice. They had heard His call on their lives and responded. They were sold out to God and ready to build His kingdom. They had left their vocations, friends and family. Notice the first thing that Jesus did before sending them out on their own. Jesus empowered them for the spiritual warfare they were about to enter into. Today it is just the same. We have been given the power of the Holy Ghost to accomplish the work that we have been entrusted with. Power to witness; power to heal the sick; power to set captives free; power to live the life Jesus has set out before us. It is that power that I want to see actively moving in our midst with miracles, signs and wonders – the real, not the fake or conjured. We sing the words, I’m lost without you, I’m desperate for you – Are you really? I’m getting hungrier and more desperate to see God moving powerfully in our meetings and I know only one way to do that – draw close to Him, spend more time with Him, and I’m willing to do whatever it takes to see more of His power in our lives.

**9:2** Jesus then gave the disciples specific instructions so they would know exactly what their mission was. **Why did Jesus tell the disciples to** **announce His kingdom by both preaching and healing?** Let’s ‘couple up’ and between you discuss some answers. Just take two or three minutes.

I believe that if the message was limited to just preaching, the people might have seen His kingdom as words only with no evidence of His miraculous power. On the other hand, if there was only healing without preaching the Good News, the people might have missed the importance of repentance and salvation and that right relationship with God was necessary. Most of the people were hoping that Jesus was going to overthrow the Roman dictators and bring them freedom, wealth and power. People prefer material possessions, personal pleasure, money and power over spiritual blessings and that is definitely true of the people of our present world – and unfortunately, even amongst Christians. The truth about Jesus is that He is both God and man; spiritual and physical; and the salvation He offers is for the spirit and for the body (healing). Where there is salvation for the spirit of man there should be the accompanying demonstration of God’s power to heal the physical body. I want to see us, here, moving as Jesus and the disciples did – with salvation and healing – they are coupled together. What instructions have we been given? In **Mark 15** Jesus gave us a broad hint. ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing and healing in my name.’ Where and how are we to go? **Acts chapter 1** gives us a plan of action. First, we are to go to our Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria and then the ends of the earth. Where is your Jerusalem, Judea, etc? Why is Jesus plan in Acts 1 so wise?

**9:3,4** Jesus then gave His 12 disciples specific instructions as to what they were to take with them, where to go, who to stay with etc. **Why do you think the disciples were instructed to depend on others while they carried out the mission of going town to town? (**Into your couples once more.) Interestingly enough we adopted this same method in Africa, with great success. We would go deep in the jungle with the Gospel, arrive at the a central village church where other churches would gather, present the gospel and now they would look after our sleeping arrangements and our food, even sometimes paying towards the petrol, or gas it took to get there.

I believe Jesus had several good reasons. **1)** By moving this way, it was a cooperative mission where each side worked together as a team to accomplish the work of God. Building God’s kingdom requires a team mentality. We are all important in God’s kingdom, we have all been given gifts and talents and we all have work to do, locally in our church setting and to the regions beyond – fitting together as a team. I love the example of the African family. One is sweeping the compound, another is washing the clothes, another is gathering wood, preparing the fire, digging in the field etc. Then all gather for the meal. **2)** It also showed the people that Jesus had not come to offer wealth and riches to the people or the disciples**. 3)** It forced the disciples to depend on God’s power for their supply, not on their ability to provide what was needed. **4)** The villagers’ involvement must have made them eager to hear the message and experience the healing touch of God. For a short term mission this was a great way to move but it was not intended to be a permanent way of life. Also, Jesus purpose was to blanket the Judea area with the Gospel and travelling light meant they could move quickly.

**9:4** **Quick question: why did Jesus instruct them to stay at only one home?** Discussion. By staying in one home, the potential for jealousy amongst the villagers is removed. The potential for offence would also be removed, either because you left their home, or you had not chosen to stay with them. Again, we adopted and used Jesus’ plan with great success in Africa.

We left off last week with this question, let’s take a quick look at it again.

**9:5** Jesus told them how to deal with rejection or difficult situations. It was important to know that the unaccepting town was rejecting God and His message, not them personally. Today when people reject your attempts to talk to them about the Gospel, it is just as important to know that they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting Jesus in you. 32 years ago we were living at Monte Lake on Highway 97, about 17 miles from Kamloops. Saturday mornings were devoted to the family – first Dad’s chocolate chip pancakes, then fishing or horseback riding or some other activity. Later in the afternoon I would move around the community area with newly converted self-proclaimed mayor Ted and talk to people about the importance of having Jesus in their lives. At one particular house, Ted said, No, don’t go there. This man is the owner of a large logging operation and all his sons are loggers and truck drivers – big, mean and tough. They don’t like Christians and make fun of them. So I knocked on the door anyway, and Archie answered the door, reluctantly letting me in. He said, ‘I know what you are doing. Do not talk about Jesus here – I don’t want to hear a single word about Him, or I’ll throw you out.’ So the conversation went well for a few minutes, then Archie asked, ‘Why do you have that bus parked in front of your place?’ I explained it was to take people from Monte Lake in to the Church. ‘Why do you do that?’ I explained how knowing Jesus had changed me completely turned my life around. He became furious, literally turning red with anger, warning me again not to talk about Jesus. He finally quieted down and calmer conversation resumed once more. Then Archie asked another question about my life, so what could I do? Once more I began giving my testimony. Again he became suffused with anger, turning red with sweat forming on his forehead and rolling down his face. Back to normal conversation again, and once more talk returned to Jesus. This time he literally roared at us to get out of his house, so we complied and left. Ted’s eyes were big and round and fearful, but I was able to re-assure him, Archie wasn’t upset with us, he was angry with the message of Jesus, not us, so don’t take it personally. But I had never seen Holy Ghost conviction quite like that – shouting loudly, face all red, sweating profusely – but out the door we went and on to the next house. Some weeks later, Archie did give his life to Jesus. His neighbor, a friend of ours, led him to the Lord. Archie passed away some months after that, but Jesus was now his friend, and heaven is now his home. We will have quite a conversation when we all get together.

**Luke 10:16** ‘Then He said to His disciples, ‘Those who welcome you are welcoming Me. And those who reject you are rejecting Me. And those who reject Me are rejecting God who sent Me.’ So do not make the mistake of thinking that ‘product refusal’ is personal rejection. When you face rejection they are rejecting the message of Jesus and His Father who sent Him. It somehow makes it easier to maintain a positive mental attitude and carry on to the next person.

Now, in the Jewish culture, pious Jews would shake the dust from their feet after passing through Gentile cities to show their separation from Gentile practices. So if the disciples were to shake the dust of a Jewish town from their feet, this would show their separation from Jews who were rejecting their Messiah. The disciples were not responsible for the people’s response to the message, just as we are not responsible for those who may reject Jesus forgiveness and love. Do like the disciples did, shake a little dust, and simply get moving on!

**9:10** Jesus held the disciples accountable. They came back from their evangelistic outreach and told Jesus all they had done. Some day in the near future we are also going to tell Jesus how we spent our time and what we did for him. We will be held accountable by God for our actions, or lack of actions**.**

So we have seen Jesus telling or teaching His disciples how to evangelize their world, empowering them before sending them out. He gave them a message to take with complete instructions as to what to take with them, where to stay etc., and even told them how to handle rejection. Going out to the villages and conducting healing crusades was unknown and revolutionary in Jesus day. Jesus gave us a pattern and instructions of how to conduct an evangelistic, healing crusade that work, even today. We shouldn’t be amazed when we obey Jesus, take His plans, implement them, and they really work! We should expect success.

**I have some questions for us. What are we doing right now to reach the lost here in our Jerusalem, or in Nanaimo? Are we reaching into our community with the Gospel of Good News? If not, why not? Do we have all the tools we need? Yes! Do we have the instructions we need? Yes! Then what is stopping us; what ingredient is missing? Our action! So now the question becomes, are we willing to take the time to make a plan of action for reaching the lost? Are we ready to roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty? And most importantly, are we ready to get into action and go?** Going means personal sacrifice; it means setting aside what you want to do; it means thinking of others and their needs; it means giving your time when it is not convenient or easy. **Come and talk to me and express your willingness to be involved in an outreach program, and we will see what can be planned, together as a team. Don’t fear, there are a variety of different jobs that will have to be done and sure to be something just for you.**

We left off last week talking about us – Jubilee – getting into action as far as reaching out to our community is concerned. As you were informed last week, we have the opportunity to partner with the Salvation Army in reaching out to the children in the Harewood area. As a church, once we commit, we will need to follow through. We need truck drivers, cooks and workers with the children, giving lessons etc. By gaining their trust we then can plan to reach into the homes of the children. Is there some job there that interests you; some are you feel you can be involved with? Please see my after the service – we will discuss the way ahead.

**Let’s look at another radical statement made by Jesus about His servant style of leadership found in Matthew 20:25-28 ‘**But Jesus called them (the disciples) unto Him, and said, ‘You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant); and whosoever will be the chief among you, let him be your servant (slave): Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto (served), but to minister (serve), and to give His life a ransom for many.’

**Jesus was describing leadership from a completely different and radical point of** **view.** Instead of authoritively ordering people around and lording it over them (using people), we are to instead to serve them. Jesus purpose in life was to serve others by giving His life away. Jesus demonstrated and proved His great love by showing us a new way to lead – by washing the disciples feet, by serving others and meeting their needs, and by laying down His life as a ransom paid for all humankind’s freedom from death, hell and sin. That is the servant’s heart of a real leader and the example we are to emulate. A real leader appreciates others’ worth and knows he is not above doing any job. Is that the kind of heart you demonstrate to your fellow believers? Or are you waiting to be served by everyone else? The evidence will be seen in the ‘fruit’.

**More radical servant action by Jesus!** **John 13:3-17** This is the account of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. Jesus loved the disciples, and expressed His love by serving them. He got up from the supper table, poured some water into a basin, took a towel and began washing and drying the disciples feet, including Judas Iscariot’s feet, the one who was about to betray Him. Jesus then said to them, ‘And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow: do as I have done to you.’ If even Jesus, who is God in the flesh, is willing to serve, we His followers must also have the heart of a servant, ready to help in any way in order to bring glory to God. Jesus asked this question, ‘Is the servant greater than the Master?’ No, I think not. Our great Savior and Leader has demonstrated by His amazing words and actions exactly how we are to live our lives – as servants, selflessly laying down our lives for the benefit of our fellow believers, and for the lost and dying. When we first arrived in Uganda, it was the beginning of the rainy season. Each of the Mzungu houses had a 5,000 liter rain water collection tank, and the water had to last until the next monsoon season. Several older teenagers were my shadows and had asked me for some of the this good, clean water, but we had been told not to give it away, since it was so valuable. One rainy morning I noticed the tanks were completely full because water was spilling out of the overflow pipes. I quickly gathered up about 40-5 gallon (20 liter) empty plastic jerry cans and began placing them under the overflow pipes in an attempt to catch the spilling water. My purpose was to give it to my guys to use. As I was running back and forth in the rain, a small voice spoke to me and said, ‘They are worth it Greg, they are worth it.’ My tears mingled with the rain as I responded by saying, ‘Yes, I know they are, I know they are.’ You need to know that it is eternally worth it when you see that there is something you can do that will bless and encourage others. Do it joyfully as if you were doing it for Jesus. Are you keeping alert for opportunities to serve, to help and bless others? Small acts of kindness can make a world of difference to someone’s life. It won’t happen by accident. Out of our lives may Jesus shine, filling this world with the Father’s glory.

Jesus had some very important, radical and sobering words found in **Luke 9:62 ‘**And Jesus said to him, ‘No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’ In other words, Jesus is saying that anyone who lets themselves be distracted from the work God has planned for him is **unfit for the kingdom of God.** Nothing is to detour us from the manner of living He calls good and true. You must not allow circumstances and the busyness of life bury the spiritual vision God has given you. Pick it up, dust it off and ask God, when will this happen? When will this be fulfilled? Keep what He has given you before Him in prayer. It will come to pass. What then, does Jesus expect from each of us? Total dedication; absolute commitment; no distractions; we are ‘to lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.’ **Hebrews 12** Let us strip off everything that is holding us back or slowing us down – we must be determined to lay it aside - especially sins that seem to cling to our feet and trip us up. We must be determined to give up whatever it is that is endangering our relationship with God. We are all different. What holds you back may not be a problem for me, and vice versa. Encourage your brother and sister to run the race God has laid out for them. Keep your eyes on Jesus! He has His eyes on you – and His ears, and His hands, and His angels. Amen? We are running His race and not our own, so don’t lose sight of Him, don’t leave Him behind, take Him with you everywhere you go. We are all involved in a spiritual war, a life and death battle for the souls of those who are lost and dying, going to an eternal burning hell. What are we going to do about it? Again, come and see me, speak to me, text me, email me – whatever, but let’s make a team, make a plan and get into action. Jesus has told us what to do, where to do it, He has shown us how we should reach out to the lost and He has commanded us to go, not sit. You have been called, chosen and commissioned by our Lord Jesus. In the future, we will each be held accountable for our action or inaction. **Are you ready? Are you really, really ready? Let’s serve others by taking them Jesus!**

**Radical Command #1 The Importance of Forgiveness**

The very first forgiveness you encountered at the start of our Christian walk is when you called out to your heavenly Father, repented of your sins and asked Him to come into your life. If you remember, there was a wonderful feeling of freedom; He heard your cry; He answered you and it was as if a heavy weight or burden had been lifted off you. **1John 1:9** ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us all our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ No matter what the offences or how great the sin, our God will forgive us. That is just the beginning of our forgiveness journey because of our human nature and the many struggles we go through. The unfailing mercy, grace and love of our Lord is always there to pick us up, dust us off and send us on our way once more.

In the early 90’s we lived in the interior town of Kamloops. I was a construction contractor and as such would hire many different sub trades to complete projects. Tony did gyproc finishing, or taping as we call it, and looked after the work I had. He was a cocky young guy and told me on no uncertain terms he didn’t need or want Jesus. Later on I was involved in a head-on collision and had some serious injuries – broken pelvis and hip plus some facial breaks as well, so I was in our living room stuck on a hospital bed for a month. It was at that time I got a call from Tony, asking to meet with me; he wanted to talk. I told him to come over at 8:00 am the next morning, which he did. He was shocked to see me stuck to a hospital bed, but I told him to stay. His problems surrounded his marriage and the lack of employment. Of course, I told him Jesus was the answer to all his problems, and after an hour or so, he cried his way to Jesus. I told him to come back the next morning. I knew he had to be discipled. I thought I would have time to prepare for him, but the drugs caused me to forget, and there he was the next morning, with me unprepared. My Bible just fell open to Matthew 6 and I read two verses – vs. 14 and 15 (we must forgive others to receive God’s forgiveness and vice versa) – and stopped there. Don’t we have to read the whole chapter or the whole book? Tony asked. No, I said, let’s read it again. This time he jumped up and began shouting, ‘No, I will never forgive him, I refuse to forgive him, I’m going to kill him.’ He calmed down a bit and told me how his step-father would beat him badly, twice putting him in the hospital. Once Tony had tried to kill his step-father with his car, but the battery ran dead because he had the radio and wipers on, so the car wouldn’t start. God saved your life, or you would be rotting in jail, I told Tony. If you don’t forgive him, God will not forgive you. He began pacing and shouting again, then the Holy Spirit moved on him and he burst into tears. He sincerely forgave his step-father and we spent a little more time going through the names of others to forgive as they came to his mind. [Just a post script – Tony led his girlfriend to the Lord, and we will be visiting Tony and Jennifer when we are in Kamloops, they are still serving the Lord] When you forgive others, God forgives you, and His love floods your life and the Spirit is able to move and convict in other areas of your life.

We are good at saying that we want to be more God-like and Christ-like, but are we ready to forgive those who do and say wrong things to us? Here is our chance to emulate God’s forgiving nature. Forgiveness is a two-way street as we shall see. In our ever maturing walk with God, we will be forgiving others and asking them for their forgiveness and they will be asking for our forgiveness as well. The Bible is very clear as to where our responsibility lies and how we are required to act. So let’s read and understand what God has to say about this subject.

**Let’s get radical! Matthew 6:12,14,15** ‘And forgive us our debts (sins) as we forgive our debtors (those who sin against us). For if you forgive men their trespasses (sins) your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses (sins against you) neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (sins).’ This is bold, tough, revolutionary language straight from Jesus! If you keep and harbor unforgiveness within your heart for wrongs committed against you, any future relationship with God is ended, over, finished, null and void! That’s worth reading again. Please, I am just the messenger, so don’t argue with me; argue with Jesus, if you dare, and let me know how that goes. It really seems very clear. You will not progress with God and enjoy His plans for your life until you get serious, make the time to sit down, list everyone who has offended you in some way or another, and forgive each and every one of them for all the wrongs done to you. **It is your life, your choice and your destiny at stake!** This is extremely important. Please don’t just ignore it. This is an eternal life and death issue. We are to forgive others because we have been forgiven. **In Matthew 18,** Peter asked Jesus how many times we are to forgive and offending brother or sister. Jewish law said you must forgive someone three times, so Peter thought he was being generous by suggesting we should forgive 7 times. Jesus response was that we should forgive 70 times 7 times, meaning there was no limit to the number of times we are to forgive. How many times have you sinned and been forgiven by God? Satan sins a lot but God forgives a lot. You don’t have to climb up into heaven to find out if there is unforgiveness lurking in your heart. Just take a good long look inside yourself and you will know who you have not yet taken the time to forgive the wrongs done to you.

Read the parable of the unforgiving debtor. **Matthew 18:23-35** The lesson is clear. Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should never withhold forgiveness from others. By not forgiving, you have signed your eternal death certificate.

I have some ‘forgiveness forms’ that will help you work it out. They are free!

**The next radical statement** made by Jesus concerning forgiveness is found in **Matthew 5:23,24** ‘So when you go to Church and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you (you have wronged them), leave Church, go and be reconciled to that person. Then come back and meet with God.’ Jesus is now requiring us to go to those **we know we have wronged** and ask them to forgive us. It is evident that if you do not go to those who you know you have done wrong to, you are wasting your time by going to church and actually thinking that you still have a relationship with God. A broken relationship with our brothers and sisters translates to a broken relationship with God. Resolve the issue quickly by going to them; apologize and ask their forgiveness. Our relation-ship with others is a reflection of our relationship with God.

**1John 4:20,21** ‘If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God who he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God love his brother also.’ The true test of our love for God is how we treat family members and our fellow believers. When we wrong them, are we quick to seek their forgiveness? We cannot say we love God if we treat those around us without careful care, love and consideration. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you right now about those you need to approach whom you have wronged, and ask their forgiveness. Maybe you have to make a list – do it. **Exodus 22:3-12** speaks of making restitution to those we may have harmed or caused loss of some sort. You may have to make payment to those you wronged, but do not allow that to dissuade you from following through and doing what is right before man and God.

**Question:** What if a person refuses to forgive you? What is important is that you have done what is right before God and His Word, and now you are in right standing with God. You have God’s approval!

**DANGER:** Continuing to harbor unforgiveness has some horrible consequences. Your relationship with God is blocked. Satan has gained an open crack in your armor and he will exploit it. This break in your right relationship with God is dangerous to your spiritual well-being. It will make your spirit feeble and your prayers ineffective. It will pull the plug on your faith and drain you so completely you won’t have enough strength or power to move a molehill, never mind a mountain.

**Why should you forgive?**

**1)** It is a command from Jesus. **Luke 6:37** ‘…..forgive and you shall be forgiven.’

**2)** So your sins will be forgiven. **Matthew 6:14** ‘For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.’

**3)** So your prayers will rise to God unhindered. **Mark 11:25** ‘And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any…..’

**4)** Be God-like and do what He has done for you. **Colossians 3:13** ‘Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you.’

**Practice forgiveness immediately after an offence. Don’t wait for your heart to harden!**

When you forgive, it sets you free from satanic bondage! It is like a load has been lifted off of you. It re-establishes a right relationship with the person you were holding a grudge against, **and best of all,** your relationship with God is restored. Now you can begin laying the foundation of love because the issue of forgiveness has been taken care of.

**Giving and asking for forgiveness is your personal choice – it is up to you!**

So receive God’s gift of forgiveness through Jesus, then forgive all those who have wronged you. Now go to those who you have wronged and ask their forgiveness. Do not put it off any longer. **Do not allow satan to steal your eternal Destiny!**

**Radical Command #2** **The Duty of Love**

God’s love for His children is not Hollywood love; it is ‘agape’ love, the most amazing love of all. God has shown His love for us in that, while we were still sinners, He loved us by sending His Son, Jesus, to die and shed His blood for our sins. **(Romans 5:8)** God’s love is a giving, sacrificial love; He accepts us as we are; there are no strings attached; His love has no conditions; His love is extended to all humankind. God’s love is not based on emotion, and we are to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord with this same kind of love. Agape love is a matter of personal choice, not only to be given when people deserve love, but even when they do not deserve it. Love is a command given to us by God. Love is a seed that we must choose to plant deep in our hearts. When the seed is planted, now we must water this seed, nurture and weed the seedling, and soon it becomes a beautiful tree, producing the fruit of God’s love extended to our fellow believers. Love involves our actions. We must show that we love the saints, not just say so.

**‘Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.’ 1Corinthians 13: 4-7 Love (agape – God’s love) is the foundation of our Christian life – now build on it.**

**The Living Bible 1John 4:20,21** ‘If anyone says, ‘I love God’ but keeps on hating his brother, he is a liar; for if he doesn’t love his brother who is right in front of him, how can he love God who he has never seen? And God has said that one must love not only God, but his brother too.’ Will we find liars in heaven? Of course not! That is why I call this radical command ‘The duty of Love’. A duty is something that must be done; you have to do it or there will be grave consequences – you might not get paid or you may lose your job or many other serious problems could arise. In the army, a duty roster is posted and it must be obeyed and followed to the letter or you will face severe discipline. In the same way, in God’s army the command has been given to love one another. There are blessings for obedience and discipline for disobedience. **John 13:34** Jesus speaking, ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.’ This is a recurrent theme throughout the New Testament. **James 2:8,9 4:11 1Peter 2:17 1John 2:23 4:7,8,21** **11John 1:6 John 15:12,17** We must love all Christians everywhere we go because it is a commandment and a law. A command and a law must be obeyed, because disobedience results in discipline from God and unrepented sin results in separation from God. **1John 4:8** ‘But if a person isn’t loving and kind, this shows that he does not know God – for God is love.’ Agape love is a debt we will never finish paying. **Romans 13:8** ‘Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.’ In other words, pay your debts but never finish paying the debt of love. **Question: (couple up) Why is love** **for others something we owe, or a debt?** We are forever in debt to Jesus for the wonderful love He poured out on us. One of the only ways we could ever begin to pay this debt is by loving others in return. Since Jesus’ love is infinitely greater than ours we will always have the obligation to love our neighbors.

**The next question is,** how can we get to the place of loving the saints with the same love that God has loved us with? (Remember, His love is unconditional, is not moved by emotions and He chose to love us, in spite of our sin.) You must make a personal determination that you will love the saints no matter how un-saintly they may appear; that you will find ways of showing them your love, not just empty words. It requires you to choose to love as God loves. Practice love until it finally becomes your nature, (not your second nature) but an automatic response. It can be a learned behavior; a learned response. **Living Bible 1John 4:7** ‘Dear friends, let us **practice** loving each other, for love comes from God and those who are loving and kind **show** that they are the children of God, and that they are getting to know Him better.’ It’s time to clean up your ‘love life’! **Question: (couple up)** **How could you** **‘practice’ God’s love on the saints?**

 **Follow and complete the following 3 steps until you’ve got it:**

**1)** Think of someone you don’t like, or someone who really, really irritates you. You may have to get a sheet of paper at home and write down each name that comes to mind. Now pray the following prayer over each name. **‘Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me. Please fill me with your love. Forgive me dear Lord for being disobedient to your Word. I am declaring right now my love for (say the name of the person). In Jesus name, Amen.’** This is taking responsibility foryour wrong behavior. You are now taking control of your mind and emotions and deliberately subjecting them to God’s will.

**2)** The next time you see this person, go and greet them warmly and sincerely. Perhaps you might even give them a loving hug! You may even apologize to them and ask for forgiveness because of the way you have been treating them; avoiding them; speaking badly about them. Repeat this process as often as necessary, and your mind, words and actions will come into line with Jesus’ command to love one another. What if this person does another ‘nasty’ to you? Immediately forgive them and continue truly loving them. **Matthew 18:22** ‘Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I say not unto you, until seven times: but until seventy times seven.’ In other words, there is no end to the number of times we must forgive others. Don’t even keep track of how many times they may ask.

**3)** Now look for ways to demonstrate your love for this ‘unlovely’ person. You are required to show, to demonstrate your new-found Godly love. Perhaps have them over for dinner, or take them out to coffee, or buy them some small gift, or I’m sure you can think of something appropriate. Maintain control of your mind and emotions.

**The results are enormous,** for them but especially for you. Now you have established a foundation of love in your life that can be built on. From your Godly love will flow and grow all the other fruits of the Spirit. Just think about it. When you have this love blooming in your life, you will find that you are full of JOY! **Living Bible John 15:9-11** ‘I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Live within my love. When you obey me you are living in my love, just as I obey my Father and live in His love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, **your cup of joy will overflow!’** Got no Joy? Here is the solution! Obey Jesus, live in His love, love the saints and you will have joy bubbling up inside and overflowing! Sing Chorus – ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another, that your joy may be full.’ Here is another wonderful result! When you are full of joy, you also have peace like a river, another fruit of the Spirit. When you determine to establish love in your life, joy will flow and peace will reign. You will be amazed as more of the Spirit fruits begin to grow and develop in your life, because when you love others with God’s love, you will have - patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control. No big struggle – all you did was show love, and now all the Spirit-fruits are visibly growing.

**Okay, it’s time to get revolutionary!** **Matthew 22:37-39** This is Jesus speaking. ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, **you shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ Jesus goes on to say that when you have accomplished this; you have fulfilled the whole law. Imagine! We are in the dispensation of grace, but here is how you can fulfill the entire law. So we end up fulfilling the law whether we want to or not! **Question: (couple up) How** **could the entire law be fulfilled just by loving your neighbor as yourself?** When you love your neighbor as you do yourself, you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him. You won’t sin with his wife or want what is his or do anything else the 10 Commandments (found in **Exodus 20)** say is sinful. All 10 are wrapped up in this one command, to love your neighbor as yourself. Love will never do anything wrong to anyone and that is why it is the only law you need to obey – it satisfies all of God’s requirements.

**Now let’s get radical!** Read **Luke 6:27-36** Jesus is raising the bar by saying that it is not good enough just to love those who love you and to love those do who do nice things for you. Now we are challenged to:

**1)** Love our enemies! How can we do that? Jesus was talking about an act of our will; making an effort to act in their best interest. **2)** Do good to those who hate you! How? Think of ways to help and bless them. **3)** Bless those who curse you! How? Lift them before the Lord in prayers. **4)** Pray for those who hurt you! **5)** Don’t retaliate when you are mistreated! **6)** Give your shirt when asked - and even add your coat! **7)** Give what you have to anyone who asks for it! **8)** When things are taken/stolen from you, don’t worry about getting them back! **9)** Lend to your enemies and do not expect or hope for repayment! Whew!

Hello Jesus, you have cleaned me out physically and emotionally – anything else you can think of, anything you missed? But notice the incredible, fantastic results. Your reward from heaven (and in heaven) will be **GREAT** (we can’t even begin to imagine what our reward might be, but we know that our God is an extravagant God!) And best of all, we are called the children of the most Highest and that means we will be living with Him for **eternity** – we are His sons and daughters! It is important to note that all the above mentioned actions can only be accomplished because we have been filled with the love of God; infused with His love. Now look at **verse 38.** We love to quote this verse, and many times tend to ignore the first word. **Give.** But isn’t that just what we have done? We have given love, good things, blessing, prayer, our shirt and our coat, given whatever asked for, given our possessions even unwillingly, not expecting them back! Loaned our possessions, again not expecting them back! So now **vs.38** kicks into action! One of God’s unchangeable principles or one of His laws is this: **you will reap exactly what you sow!** Sow love, sow mercy, sow compassion, sow grace, sow generosity, sow forgiveness – and all these ‘crops’ will come back to you in full and overflowing measure! The more you give, the more you will receive.

**How revolutionary! How radical!** God’s ways and His thoughts are indeed far above our ways and thoughts – and that is why we serve Him with all our hearts, minds and strength. Amen? **So let’s sum up this agape love issue.** First, God loved us, because of His love we love Him in return, His love fills us to overflowing and we next love our brothers and sisters in the Lord (the saints) and finally, we love the lost (the sinners). Let us be those who put God’s amazing plan of loving our neighbor the same ways we love ourselves into action! **‘You can serve without loving but you cannot love without serving.’**

**Revolutionary Concept #2** **The Wealthy, Possessions and Money**

Generally we can talk to people about any topic of conversation that might come up with the exception of one subject – MONEY! We are very proper and conservative Canadians. We would never ask, how much money do you owe the bank? How much money do you have you got saved? What portfolio of stocks and bonds do you carry? Do you have an offshore bank account? Do you own your car outright? How much money do you make in a month? These questions are off limits. But Jesus had no problem talking about people and their money. And He made some radical statements about wealth, having possessions, and the wealthy that left the crowd buzzing.

One of His radical statements about wealth is found in **Matthew 6:19-24.** ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.’ In other words, it’s okay to have a savings account, but be sure to open up a heavenly bank account as well. Our first loyalty should be to those things that never fade away and lose their value, cannot be stolen or used up, and never rust away – heavenly treasure. We live in a materialistic society where many people honor, revere and serve the ‘Almighty Dollar’. People spend their entire lives collecting and accumulating wealth, only to die and leave it all behind. I was walking with a group of believers by Lake Kivu in Goma, DR Congo, and we looked down on a massive, breath-taking mansion that had a four car garage, swimming pool, tennis court, gorgeous grounds and all the beautiful trappings of the super-wealthy. I asked, I’m sure with awe in my voice, ‘Who owns that?’ It triggered a long, sordid story of how a Muslim man, who was a trader, accumulated incredible wealth and had this multi-million dollar state-of-the-art estate developed and built. Shortly after moving into it, he suddenly died, leaving all to his family, who were now embroiled and tangled up in the court system, wrangling over who should have it. I remember thinking, isn’t that just typical. All that hard work, finally move into the palace and you never get to enjoy it. This is not at all like God’s preparations for us. ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.’ **John 14** The only problem is, to get to your mansion, you will have to die. That’s how we get to heaven, but once there, we will live forever! We will get to enjoy our mansion for eternity. No mortgage payments, no rent, no having to move, no foreclosure – it’s yours forever! Let not your heart be troubled, your mansion will be perfectly beautiful in every way. And remember, Jesus was a carpenter, a master builder! No deficiencies or red cards in heaven!

It is interesting to note that many wise people spend time and money planning for the details surrounding their death. They put money aside for the funeral home services, for their coffin and for a burial plot – perhaps even a head-stone with their name chiseled on it. How wise are you? As a Bible-reading, Bible believing, Bible-obeying Christian you need to make plans and preparations **for BEYOND the** **grave.** God’s has promised to reward His servants for enduring hardship, being faithful and living sacrificial lives for Him while here on earth. The only way we can ‘lay up treasure in heaven’ is to make it a goal and a plan of action **WHILE we** **are here and still alive.** The choices we make here will affect us for all eternity. **1Corinthians 3:8** ‘Each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.’ Salvation and eternal life are gifts from God which cannot be earned, but rewards are given based on the quality of our labor here on earth for Him. **Revelation 22:12** ‘Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to everyone according to his work.’ The reward will be compensatory to the quality of services rendered. James may have had that in mind when he said, ‘Faith without works is dead.’ **Revelation 2:23** ‘I am He who searches the mind and the hearts and I will give to each one of you **according to your works.’** What kind of reward is God talking about? The Word of God does not specify the exact nature of reward, but our God is an extravagant God and be sure that He has some extremely intense and incredible rewards that He is keeping secret until ‘Rewards Day’!

**What exactly are good works?** ‘Good works are the ‘good’ things we do in obedience and love to God, for His glory, in an attitude of faith and thanksgiving. Biblical good works include every aspect of our thinking and conduct before God.’

**What are some of the good works we can send on ahead that will be counted as ‘treasure in heaven?’ How do we ‘lay up treasure in heaven? (couple up)**

Good works are good deeds, especially when they are directed at the poor, widows and orphans. ‘Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.’ **James 1:27** When care is given to the helpless and those who cannot pay back what has been given, that is the Church in action, putting God’s Word into practice. Food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, help for the stranger, visiting the sick in hospitals, visiting the prisoners in jail, school fees for the student, caring for the mentally handi-capped or disabled, and all other manner of meeting needs, are good deeds, the treasure we are sending ahead, for the rewards of God. **Matthew 25:31-46**

**[Foot Note:** It is important to note that unbelievers are unfit for any good work. Their good efforts are not recognized or approved by God. How many times have you heard a really good person say, ‘I do good, I don’t swear, I don’t drink, I don’t fornicate or adulterate’ etc. It is not important how good you are or how bad you may have been, what is important is this: have you asked Jesus into your heart and life, is He your personal Savior? **Titus 1:16** ‘They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, being disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.’ Their lack of repentance speaks louder than their words.]

**[Another Foot Note: Luke 17:10** ‘So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.’ Being obedient is our duty – there will be no special award ceremony for obedience!]

**Colossians 1:10** ‘That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work.’ This means you are to pursue the goal of pleasing the Lord in everything you do. **Ephesians 2:10** ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’ Christians are not Christians because of their good works, it is because they are Christ-followers, those who believed and confessed Jesus as their Savior. He takes up residence in our lives and good works are the result. We are to be fruitful in good works, bringing forth fruit that is pleasing to God. Look at **Colossians 1:4**. It is because of ‘your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the world of truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.’ Good works are the results or the ‘fruit’ of our love for Jesus, and our love for the saints.

We are to be ‘a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God’, and our good works are then like a sweet smelling sacrificial love-offering to God. **Romans 12**

Our good works are a witness to the unsaved which the Holy Spirit uses to bring the lost to faith in Christ. **Matthew** **5:16** ‘Let your lights so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’

Our good works are to be an example that will edify our fellow believers. **Titus 2:7** ‘In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.’

Good works are a way we can meet the physical needs of our fellow believers. **Titus 3:14** ‘And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.’ So when you are meeting needs you are meeting needs by being fruitful, and you are pleasing to God.

**Good works are not only good deeds.** Good works includes every aspect of our thinking and conduct before God. That means not only caring for the poor, the widows and orphans, but behaving in a godly way toward your employer.

Good works includes giving to the work and ministry of our Church, but it also means truly loving every person who attends.

Good works means not only giving a Bible to someone who doesn’t have one, but it means understanding, believing and living everything that is in the Bible, from cover to cover.

Good works are an integral part of God’s eternal plan, and so they are our highest responsibility. **Ephesians 2:10** ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.’ **Titus 2:14** ‘Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.’

This is the proper place and nature of good works – **to please Jesus**, not to please ourselves. Salvation through Jesus is the root, good works are the fruit, and it is all part of God’s plan that good works are a witness to the world. Good works are an example and blessing to others and they edify our fellow believers.

Our desires for the ‘treasures and pleasures’ this old earth offers us must be far outweighed by our commitment to God and spiritual issues. All your time and energy will be spent thinking about whatever it is you decide to invest your life in. Fascination with possessions, money and pleasure can be steps towards all kinds of sin. Ask, does money control me or do I control money? Is God the master of my life, or is money? Here is a good test: analyze your thought world and see exactly what you spend the most time and energy thinking about and doing. ‘For where your treasure is there will your heart (mind) be also.’ It is easy to be content with what we have when we know that all we have chosen to do in obedience to God and His Word will last forever; it’s eternal. God is a perfect bookkeeper and He going to keep a perfect record of all we send ahead of us.

**Let’s take a quick look at verses 22 and 23.** These are two very interesting verses, sandwiched in between where our treasures are and which master we will choose to serve. Closer inspection reveals that the eye is the window of the soul, and as we see and think about all the riches, wealth, money, power and pleasure surrounding us, our desires, ambitions and greed can easily begin to distort and cloud our once pure vision. It is easy to be overwhelmed by self-serving desires and selfish interests that block that clear spiritual vision we used to have. We have to dig up our spiritual vision that’s been buried under an avalanche of useless involvements, blow the dust off and re-affirm our commitment to follow God.

**Still to come……**

**Revolutionary Concept #3** Jesus demands our highest level of commitment Luke 12:51-53 9:23-27

**Revolutionary Concept #4** Pride Luke 18:14