

Love No Matter What

John 15:31–35

Wednesday July 7, 2021

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“By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

—Jesus (John 15:35)

In the State of North Carolina vs. Linkhaw, the North Carolina Supreme Court reversed the conviction of a man who sang terribly in church. As a matter of fact, he sang so badly in church that a jury had found him guilty of “disturbing a religious congregation.”

In the 1870s, William Linkhaw attended the Lumberton, North Carolina Methodist Church. He sang hymns very loudly and completely off-key. Deviating from the correct notes, he continued singing well after the congregation reached each verse’s end.

Linkhaw’s fellow congregants reacted in various ways: some found him hilarious, others thought him annoying, and still others were deeply angered by his disruptions. During one service, the pastor simply read the hymn aloud to avoid conflict. He refused to sing it to prevent the uproar that would inevitably occur.

A Robeson County grand jury handed down a misdemeanor indictment against Linkhaw. They charged him with disturbing the peace of a worship service—a violation of state law. The case went to trial in August 1872. Several witnesses, including the church’s pastor, testified Linkhaw’s singing regularly disrupted worship services. Witness testimony also called Linkhaw a devout and spiritual man. Some suggested he and the church did nothing to find common ground.

The jury found William Linkhaw guilty, and the judge fined him one penny. Linkhaw appealed the judgment against him to the North Carolina Supreme Court; the case was heard in 1873. In an opinion by Justice Thomas Settle, the court unanimously set aside the verdict.

It seems sad that a congregation, its pastor, and a church member could not find some common ground regarding the well-intentioned but disruptive singing of that member. The testimony of the Lord suffered as a result of the disagreement spilling out of the church. In His Upper Room Discourse, Jesus told His disciples of the importance of their unity. *“By this, everyone*

will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 15:35). Their unity and love for one another would be the distinguishing mark that they were genuinely His followers.

If we say we love Jesus, part of our responsibility is to love our brothers and sisters in His family—even when it isn’t easy. The more difficult it is for us to get along, the harder we must strive to love each other. The bond of love we have in Christ distinguishes us from others. We must go out of our way to forgive, extend grace, and find unity with each other when necessary. Our call to love each other requires of us that we demonstrate the very love of Jesus to one another. We are called to set aside our own opinions, preferences, and desires—if necessary—to love each other.

After a season of division and disagreement over politics and COVID, we need to seek restoration with those in the body of Christ with whom we have had bitter disputes. We must follow the command of our Lord to love one another. There are no exceptions to what He has required of us as His followers!

Maybe you need to write an email, send a text, make a call, or plan a visit to rebuild in love a relationship strained in recent months or years. Don’t wait for the other person to act. Do what you know to do and follow Christ’s example to humble yourself and love others!

When we love each other in Christ’s family, we show the world we are indeed His followers!

Today’s Prayer

Dear Father, bring to my awareness any individuals who may have experienced anything less than your love from me. Bring to my mind the names of those with whom I have created disharmony and/or demonstrated a divisive spirit. Give me the boldness and grace to seek their forgiveness and express my heartfelt apology. May all who know me know and feel Christ’s love through me!