How many pills do you take a day? If I was a betting Senior citizen I would say, “Over 5!” Each morning, my wife puts out 4 pills on the stove. I am not even sure what they are, but I take them. Don’t question the wisdom of your wife. I think one of them is a vitamin. They all are supposed to be good for me.

Wouldn’t it be even better if we could come up with some vitamin pill to help people love each other more? Imagine a mother giving her two daughters who are always fighting a pill that would help them get along better. Imagine a husband and wife who are always bickering taking their morning vitamins that improve their marriage. Imagine a teacher handing out pills to the students to help them show greater kindness and respect for each other. Think of what a heavy dose of get along better pills could do for the exploding prison population in Miami and Orlando and the nasty gang members stabbing each other on those streets? If any someone could invent these pills, what a better place our world would be! As the old song says, “All we need is love, love is all we need.”

Well, I want to tell all you health conscious people, there is such a pill out there. It’s called the Jesus Vitamin. Jesus is going to fill your prescription today from God’s Word. So let’s take the medication: “Love As I Have Loved You.”

Jesus spoke these words after Judas had left the room. These words about love were spoken in the context of a very unloving environment. Jesus was deeply troubled by what Judas was going to do to him. It says early in this chapter, “After he had said this Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.’” Then Jesus had to endure the pain of watching Judas cover up and lie about what he was doing. The other disciples were arguing with each other about who was the greatest in the kingdom of God. In this unloving environment Jesus spoke about his love for us that goes beyond any kind of love we have ever known in this life.

Here is the scene in our text, "After Judas had left, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified & God is glorified in Him.'” Jesus says, "I’m going to be glorified," & it is evident that He is talking about His own crucifixion. But how can any glory come out of that? How can glory come out of the Son of God hanging on an old rugged, bloody cross? How can glory come out of suffering & pain & death? There is just one way. On the cross Jesus defeated Satan. On the cross He became the sacrifice to redeem us from all the sins that separate us from God. On the cross He built a bridge between man & God so that we could be together again. "I am going to be glorified," He said. "But there is more. God will also be glorified through Me." What a strange statement! How could God be glorified through Jesus Christ? Well again, the answer is found in the cross. On the cross Jesus reveals what God is like. On the cross we see the love & mercy of God, the grace & justice of God. We see the righteousness, the holiness, & the power of God. It is all displayed there on the cross. Jesus is telling us, "Whenever we show the world the love & mercy & grace of God in our lives, then God is being glorified through us."

It was a common thing for a Jewish person, right before he died, to gather his family together and tell them one last thing that he wanted them to remember. That’s what Jesus does here. He knows he’s going to die. He knows that he’s no longer going to be spending time with his disciples in the same way that he had been doing before. And so, the night before he died, Jesus gathered his disciples together. He had one last thing he wanted to share with them. Verse 34: “A new command I give you: Love one another.”

You could say that Jesus was giving them the 11th commandment. “Look at the fellow disciples who are sitting next to you. John, look at Andrew. Peter, look at Philip. Matthew, look at James. Look at these people who are sitting next to you! I want you to love them.” And the
The word for “love” that we find here in the Bible is really a unique word. It’s the word “Agape” in the Greek. It’s a special kind of love, a love that expects nothing in return, a love that doesn’t keep score. A love that just gives and gives and gives, and doesn’t demand any type of giving back. A generous, sacrificial kind of love. “I want you to show each other that kind of love,” Jesus told his disciples. This is a new commandment in the sense that the old one was “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Now Jesus tells them, to love as He loved them.

Very soon, the disciples would see what kind of love Jesus would show them. The giving, the sacrificing, the humility, even the suffering – all these things were a part of the love that Jesus was about to show his disciples. The way Christians would treat each other would be a visible sign to the rest of the world – these people are disciples of Jesus Christ – look at the way they treat each other. An unbelieving Greek historian in the first century wrote this about the Christians: “It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are brethren” (Lucian, AD 120-200).

Tertullian stated, ‘How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another!’

Does this kind of love exist among us, the Christians of today? Is that really a description of just how greatly we are concerned for each other? Sometimes, the answer is yes. But often times, our sinful nature does get the best of us, and the answer is a very sad no. Jesus wanted Christians to go to the ends of the earth for each other. But that sinful nature we have often gets in the way of us really showing any type of love for each other. I have this, this and this happening in my life. I may be able to do something for you, when I have a few hours available on Saturday. I am too busy to spend time on you. Self-Focus! Further, what we’re really good at, sad to say too, is finding the things that are wrong with each other. We like to point out each other’s quirks – maybe not out loud, but in our minds. When other people don’t agree with our line of thinking, we attack them, and make them look bad. Focusing on each other’s faults makes us feel better about ourselves. And that is exactly what our sinful nature likes, because by nature, we are more interested in loving ourselves, serving ourselves, and thinking of ourselves, than we are in anything else. That sinful nature we have makes any thought of loving or giving or making sacrifices for fellow Christians – often times, that is the furthest thing from our minds. Jesus wants our love for each other to stand out so much that unbelievers will take notice. But most of the time, to outsiders, we look no different from anyone else.

It’s depressing to think of our lack of love for each other. But it is comforting, and it makes our hearts rejoice, to think of Jesus’ love for us. “I have loved you,” Jesus says in John chapter 13. Have you ever pondered what that means? Jesus doesn’t love you because you’re so lovable. Jesus loves you because he is love. God is love. He doesn’t focus on your faults. He’s not turned off by your sinful tendencies. And he doesn’t wait for you to do something that would make him love you. He just loves you. And even though you never asked him to, without you even asking, he humbled himself for you, he became a man, and kept the law of God perfectly for you, as your substitute. Even though you never asked him to, he died on a cross, as a sacrifice for your sins. “What’s in it for him,” you might ask. The answer is nothing. That’s agape love – the giving, the sacrificing, the forgiving of all your sins – that’s the kind of love that Jesus has shown to you. And today, Jesus gives you more. He brings you to faith through the waters of baptism. He speaks to you through his Word. He blesses you over and over again. He forgives you. He answers your prayers. “What’s in it for him?” you might wonder again. Once again, the answer is nothing. Jesus just loves you.

And as those disciples showed that kind of love to each other, the world would take
notice. Look at verse 35: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The way is the story of love that a mother had for her child. The story is told by William Gladstone, who was announcing the death of Princess Alice of the House of Commons many years ago. The little daughter of the Princess was very sick with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter, or breathe the little girl’s breath – the princess might get sick herself, and die. “Stay away from your daughter,” she was told. Once, when her child was struggling to breathe, struggling to stay alive, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took her daughter in her arms to keep her from choking to death. Gasping for breath, her little daughter said, “Kiss me Mommy!” And without thinking of herself, the mother tenderly kissed her daughter because she wanted to help her and comfort her. A few days later the Princess got sick and died. That’s a picture of Jesus’ love for us. Jesus didn’t think about himself. He didn’t stay away from us because of our sin. He knew it would cost him his own life, but he still came down to be with us anyway, to take our sins upon himself, and to die as our sacrifice, that we might be forgiven and live forever.

Today, Jesus tells us to love each other, as he has loved us. Obviously, that starts in the home, with your family - those people that you live with every day, those people whose faults you can see, better than anybody else. What are we to do with those people? Love them, Jesus says. That means forgiving their faults, looking past their shortcomings, just as Jesus does when he looks at you. Love them. Go to the ends of the earth for them. Make big sacrifices for them. Be unusually generous toward them. Love your family and your friends in a way that will make other people look at you twice. Do you have any unbelievers in your life that you are close to? Surprise them with the way you love other people. Make it a point from this day forward to love as Christ has loved you.

Open Bible is a special church. It isn’t the kind of place where you can show up for an hour, nobody really seems to care about you, and then you go home. Our church is a place where we truly love one another. When someone asks you, “How are you doing,” we’re not just being polite. We care. It’s true that we all have our quirks and shortcomings at Open Bible. At a smaller church likes ours, that might be easier to see. But that’s not what we focus on. We forgive each other. We make sacrifices for each other. We want to be the kind of place where people will go to the ends of the earth for each other.

Modern medicine will keep putting out pills to help us with heart problems, cholesterol problems, pain and bouts of depression. No human being will ever invent a pill that will help us love each other. However, when you hear about Jesus offering us his love, free of charge, it is like the ultimate vitamin that empowers us to love each other more. Amen.