

April 28, 2013
“The New Commandment”
John 13:31-35

As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. **32** And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will soon give glory to the Son. **33** Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. **34** So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. **35** Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

In our Scripture today we revisit the last Passover supper and the last night Jesus would have with His followers. In verse 1 we read...

John 13:1

Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father.

We revisit the Last Supper from the advantage point of knowing about the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus would soon be put to death and so this became a very special time with His followers. Certainly, the things He would say and do on this night would be very important. If you knew you had a short time to live what would you tell those you love?

Several years ago I had a friend who was dying of cancer. He was in Sloan Kettering in the city. He knew his time on earth was limited and he anticipated, with great excitement, seeing the Lord. He began to call for certain people to come to his room alone that he might speak with them privately. He asked for his father –in-law to come in and spoke to him privately, and he asked for his sister-in-law to come in and he spoke to her privately. He spoke to both of them about their need to put their faith in Jesus, to ask Him to forgive their sin, be their Savior, and become followers of Christ. Both of them did become Christians after my friend's death, especially after witnessing his faith and the peace with which he died.

He also asked to speak to me. I was new in the course of study for ministers at that time, and I still remember what he said to me. He told me to keep up with my studies, to continue to be mentored by Pastor Art and Pastor George (who I worked with at that time), to prepare for ministry that God would call me to; and he let me know that he loved me.

Jesus had said many things to His followers on this night, the night of the last supper, and he showed them many things. Actually, all He had to share with them is recorded in chapters 13 through 17. However, what is unique about what He says in our text today, and with what follows, is that He said them after Judas had left. That is significant, because Judas was a false brother and what Jesus was about to share was for His sincere followers.

What He shares is important for all true believers to hear, for the believers then and now. What was this message that was so important He gave it just before He died? For after this time with them He would be arrested, and crucified; the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

So what was His crucial message?

The first thing Jesus says in vv31-32 is:

"The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him. And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will soon give glory to the Son.

The time has come for the Son of Man, Jesus' favorite way of referring to Himself, so it was time for Jesus to receive glory and because of what He was about to do that would bring Him glory God would be glorified.

"Glory" and "glorify" are not words we use in our culture, except when we read them in Scripture. In the time of Christ, the "glory" of something was not only in its appearance but also in what it would accomplish - in its purpose. So, to "glorify" means to exalt, praise, honor, magnify by completing a task.

We are all sinners. We all do things God doesn't want us to do (has anyone ever not broken one of God's commandments? Of course not!). So all have sinned; Because of sin we cannot have a personal relationship with a holy God. But God -oh how I love that phrase, "but God", It's a phrase of hope and grace- but God, loved the world, that's means you, so much that He had a marvelous plan of salvation. A plan to forgive our sin, bring us into a personal relationship with Him, and give to us eternal life and it will only be apparent with Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus was about to go through His death and resurrection, that would glorify, magnify, bring Him praise and honor by accomplishing the purpose of the Father. And the Father would receive glory, honor, praise because He sent His only Son Jesus to die for us that we might have eternal life.

Since God is exalted and praised because of what the Son accomplished, He exalts the Son by the soon to come Resurrection and ascension. Since the Father and Son are one, when one receives glory the other receives glory.

This is what God the Father wants, to see His Son elevated in our church; what God the Father wants is for Jesus to receive the honor that is due Him. If you want to experience the presence of God then adore His Son, Jesus Christ. If we want God in the power of the Holy Spirit to show up in our church than adore His Son, Jesus Christ. If you want God to show up remove whatever is blocking your adoration of Jesus Christ.

The first thing Jesus talks to His followers about is giving glory to God. Exalt, praise, honor, magnify God for what He has accomplished for us in Christ and exalt Jesus. Second a new commandment, He says (vv33-35),

“Dear children ...”

In this atmosphere of the glory of God, Jesus as Head of the family calls them, “Dear Children.” This is the only time recorded in the Gospels that Jesus refers to them as Dear Children. It is a term of intimacy and love. Then He continues...

“I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going (referring to His soon coming death and return to His glory in heaven). So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

What is new about this commandment? Even the Old Testament commanded them to love others.

Lev 19:18

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

Jesus, of course took this command even further, for when asked, “and who is our neighbor,” He taught that our neighbor is anyone in need, even if they are someone we don't like very much.

Here He seems to be speaking specifically of their love for one another, in other words believers loving other believers, Christians loving other Christians, love in the church. But that is not new either, Leviticus also mentioned loving fellow believers in God. So what is new about this commandment? The Old Testament said love others as you love yourself. How do you love yourself? Well, you provide what you need when you can, you protect yourself, you care for your physical, mental, financial, psychological, well being. The command is to treat others as you would want to be treated, and to care for others as you would want for yourself.

The command to love others as you love yourself is not new, but Jesus doesn't say that here, rather He says, “Love each other. Just as I have loved you...”- and that is what is new!

In fact this kind of love was so new that a new word had to be devised to express it. The Greeks had two words for love: “Eros,” not found in the New Testament, it described only a selfish love. The other word is “phila” found only once in the New Testament in James 4 where it is translated “friendship”. “Philia” describing no more than friendship love that thinks in terms of getting as well as giving.

But this new love, as Jesus loves had to be expressed in a stronger word. So “agape,” a rare word for love prior to Paul, came to be used in early Christian literature to describe this kind of love that Jesus demonstrated, and the quality of love that is to characterize the lives of His true disciples.

Jesus commands (it is a command, a new commandment) His disciples, His true disciples, to love each other in a new way, as Jesus loved them. How did Jesus love them?

He loved them very trustingly;
Our Lord also loved his disciples patiently.
He loved them unconditionally
Christ loved them unselfishly.
He loved Sacrificially
And Completely and
Our Lord loved his disciples practically.

His love was not based on if someone was giving love back, His love was not because He would get something out of it.
It was not based on performance, but on the value of the person. He loves even when it hurts.

He gave up all rights to Himself and put others before Himself; He abandoned Himself; His love was unselfish and from a pure heart and from pure motives. And after giving them this new commandment and went out and to die for us all and to be an example of this new commandment.

It is a new commandment because it is a new love, springing from a new nature. Only those transformed by Jesus, who have received His Holy Spirit, can have power to give this perfect kind of love, this God love. Church, love one another with agape love.

For if you keep showing this kind of love among yourselves, as Jesus says in **v35**:

“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

This command is simple to understand, but not so simple to consistently practice.

Yet Jesus makes it clear that the fulfilling of this commandment is a witness to the world. It will be how we demonstrate that we are his disciples. Jesus states that love is a Witness.

We can ask for the heart to love like Jesus. We can respond in love. We can assume the best in other people. We can act in ways that demonstrate love. We can ask the question, “Whom does God want me to love this week?” Then find tangible acts that express love and compassion toward those around you.

I challenge you this week to live out the new commandment.