**YOU MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

John 13:18-38

Key Verses 13:34-35 – *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

As Jesus’ time on earth drew closer to the end, He gave His disciples a new commandment by which to live by. This new command is so profound it formed their entire identity and was their guiding light throughout all the uncertainty that lay ahead of them. This command captures the very heart of Jesus’ ministry, all His teachings and is true today as it was two thousand years ago. In this same spirit, I pray we learn anew what it means to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

Through yesterday’s message, we witnessed Jesus setting the example of what it means to love someone to the very end. Even though He was their Lord, Master and Teacher, Jesus humbled Himself to the level of the lowest slave in order to wash the disciples’ feet (13:1-11). If one wants to have a part with Jesus, one must be willing to be cleansed by Him. So often we think that we must clean ourselves up first before we can go to Jesus: “Don’t think sinful thoughts. Get rid of bad habits. Do good deeds. Get your life in order first and only then will Jesus accept you.” We might even think we are doing Jesus a huge favour by letting Him wash us! However our acceptance by Jesus is dependent on us recognizing our desperate need of Him in the first place. Only Jesus has the power to purify us from the things that truly leave a stain on our souls i.e. our sins. Furthermore, Jesus calls on us to wash each other’s feet just as He has washed our own as proof that we are indeed in Christ (13:12-16). Instead of seeing this as a task to be endured, we learn through Jesus that this is a blessed duty, allowing us to follow in His footsteps (13:17).

However, as cinematically beautiful and touching this scene was, Jesus drops a bombshell in verse 18, **“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’”** Weeks earlier, Jesus had already warned the disciples (twice) of how He would suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders and that He would be raised to life according to Scripture (Matthew 16:21). But it wasn’t until now that Jesus specified exactly who His betrayer would be. If the disciples paid more attention when Jesus previously spoke about His coming death and resurrection, they would have asked the right questions and been ready for this very moment. Instead, they wasted that golden opportunity by arguing over who was the greatest among them (Mark 9:33-34). Now that Jesus’ time had finally come, they were woefully unprepared. The fact that each and every disciple had to question themselves is proof of this. When we fail to take God’s word of warning to heart, we can easily end up in such a situation when we encounter times of hardship and trials. Even the smallest of hurdles can becoming major stumbling blocks to following Christ if we neither remember His word nor take His word seriously.

It took a while for the reality of Jesus’ words to finally sink in but eventually, John built up the courage to ask the question on everyone’s mind. Look at verses 24-27a, **“Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.” Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.”** Imagine how devastating this revelation was. Judas was with them from the start of Jesus’ ministry. He saw so many miraculous signs that proved Jesus is the Messiah. He was sent out by Jesus to preach the Gospel and given authority by Him. He healed the sick and drove out evil spirits in Jesus’ name. He even was the treasurer entrusted with all the funds and offerings they received, so he had to be someone that all the other disciples viewed as being most trustworthy of them all (John 12:6). Yet it was Judas, of all people, who was willing to betray his lord and master. Disillusioned by how Jesus had no ambitions to be an earthly king and tempted by his own greed, Judas agreed to hand Jesus over to the religious authorities for only thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). Judas’ only concern was his own security and his own gain. Even though Judas was in the presence of God Himself for three years, it took very little for him to trade it all away and sadly become an instrument of the Devil. In his heart of hearts, Judas did not truly love Jesus.

Yet in spite of all the chaos, Jesus was in control. We see this in verse 27b, **“So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.””** It is only after Judas leaves that Jesus really goes into depth of what was truly going on at this moment. Look at verses 31-32, **“When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.”** Anyone in Jesus’ situation would have filled with anger, hopelessness and sorrow for being betrayed in such a way. Instead, Jesus tells His disciples, *“NOW the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him”* Even in the pits of despair facing the worst of mankind, God is glorified! Jesus is glorified! He was, is and forever will be glorified. For the Christian, sufferings are times where we can meet our Lord and Saviour in all His radiance and goodness. We experience firsthand His power to bring out the best out of any situation in the complete fullness of His glory (Romans 5:1-5). We know this to be true because we have Jesus as our prime example and He declares it so. God Himself declares to us that this is so!

So then, why is Jesus spending all this time washing the disciples’ feet, revealing Himself as God and talking about how He is being glorified at this very moment? Verse 33 says, **“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.”** By the next day, Jesus would be nailed to the cross, dying for the sins of humanity. As much as Jesus saw the disciples as His children, all of them will desert Him just a few hours from now even after everything He did for them. Time was running out and for that reason Jesus wanted to impart His greatest teachings, the very knowledge of the kingdom of Heaven, to them at this time. There is so much to be said about the rest of John Chapters 13-17 but the keys to understanding it all are the key verses for our passage today, **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”** (34-35).

It is imperative that we think about why Jesus calls this command new and why He chose this one specifically. The command to love another in not exactly new. God commands the Israelites in Leviticus 19:18 to “love your neighbour as yourself.” The Old Testament is filled with similar commands and attributes a lot of Israel’s misfortunes on their inability to live up to this command. Even Jesus Himself summarized all the Law and Prophets by connecting a love for God with loving your neighbour (Matthew 22:36-40, Mark 12:28:31). But now, Jesus presents this to the disciples as a new command. What is “new” about the new command? It is new in terms of the *pattern* in which we are called to love and the *power* by which we are to do so.

First is the pattern. This is the first time that Jesus says to them, “A**s I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** Christ is our model as to how to truly love another human being. During the North American leaders’ conference in May, we studied Philippians 2 and 3 specifically to learn how to love and serve one another in Christ. We are called to have the same mindset as Christ by practising His humility in being willing to love the unlovable, touch the untouchable, serve the ungrateful and do it all while thinking of their needs as being of greater importance than our own (Philippians 2:1-18). Christ, the Lord of the Universe, humbled Himself to the level of the lowliest servant and served anyone who came His way. He didn’t think of how tired He was, how much of His time and energy was being taken up or how much praise He would get on the back end because His true joy and all His worth came from bringing glory to God through loving such people. Through constant prayer and obedience to God, He literally gave everything He had to display God’s unfathomable love to the fullest, even to the point of death on a cross (Romans 5:6-8).

Furthermore, Jesus showed His love by being absolutely honest and truthful with them. In Ephesians 4:15, the Apostle Paul implores his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to “*speak the truth in love*” for the sake of growing up in Christ’s likeness and in spiritual maturity. Who is Paul’s model for this? Jesus Christ Himself! Jesus did not hide, bend, massage, spin or muddy the truth from the disciples. As mentioned before, He told them all these things so they would believe in Him (13:19). He did not do this out of anger, malice or self-righteousness but purely out of His shepherd-like love for them. Peter being told he would deny Jesus three times (36-38) was Jesus’ way of looking out for him and warning Peter of the dangers ahead. Even Judas was no exception as Jesus gave him every opportunity to not go through with his evil scheme out of a desire for him to repent and come back to Christ. Few things in life are harder than telling the truth to those we love. We would rather soften the blow or even straight-up lie because we are far more concerned about what they will think about us afterward than them actually knowing the truth and changing their ways. But to truly love someone is to desire what is best for them… and sometimes that means telling them the truth that they do not want to hear. Truth spoken in Christ-like love has the power to change someone’s life (again, look at Peter after He encounters the Risen Jesus). Hence, we need Christ to help us be truthful in all things.

The second aspect of the new command is the power by which we are to love others. We are not called to love by own ability/capacity but are called to be empowered solely by the love of Jesus Christ Himself. Later on in John 15, Jesus gives the parable of the vine and the branches (John 15:1-17). A branch can do nothing apart from the vine for the vine gives the branch everything it needs to grow and flourish. Likewise Jesus extends this parable to talk about how we are to be filled with His love in order for us to love others. As verses 15:9-13 proclaim, **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”** It is impossible to love others in a Christ-like way without Christ-like help! Jesus commands us to connect ourselves to the source in the same way a pipe is only useful when properly connected to the reservoir. All the pipe has to do is stay connected and the same can be said of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Loving others is not easy; it is incredibly costly. Our modern understanding of love places an overwhelming emphasis on the feeling of love and primarily loving those who love you. It is a very self-centered way of understanding love that only works if everyone is lovable 100% of the time. We’re not! We know this is the case as everyone has at least one person in their life they have a hard time loving even as I speak. More often than not, it is those closest to us whom we have the hardest time loving. When my relationship with my father was at its worst, I accidentally closed a car door on his head while wishing in my heart of hearts that I brought it down a whole lot harder. We had many incidents involving a lot of harsh words and afterwards, long periods of not talking to each other. As much as I tried to love him, I always felt so empty because I did so purely out of my own strength and sense of superiority over him. However, God convicted me of my self-righteousness, my lack of mercy and the absence of love in me namely through my wife and having to think even deeper about what the cross of Jesus truly means to me. He was on the cross out of love for me so I have zero right to deem someone else as being undeserving of my love. Am I perfect in displaying Christ-like love? Far from it. Nevertheless, I must persevere in His love because this is what Christ commands and wills for me. I am to love, serve and ultimately forgive in Christ Jesus because it is for my own good too. This is the new identity Christ is forming in me day by day. This is His desires for me and for us all as one unified body of Christ.

In conclusion, Jesus has given us a new command. Love for others is the defining characteristic of our lives as Christians. The extent to which we love others determines how much others see Christ in us. We are not called to love others out of our own capacity but out of the love that He fills us with. We are not called to give a cheap imitation of His love. Jesus empowers for a full-on participation, demonstration and manifestation of His love that can only be done through Him. He is our model and His words our manual to living a life abounding in His love, channeling it out into whatever places and spaces He leads us. I pray that Jesus helps us abide by this command always so we may personally know His love and be all-the-more blessed as we help others to do the same.

**BIG IDEA:** Love One Another As Christ Has Loved You