

LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

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.”

Last week, we learned how Jesus demonstrated his love by washing his disciples' feet. Jesus told his disciples, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (15). Washing someone's feet means to bear the person's weaknesses and sins. Jesus bore all our sins on the cross and washed them away with his blood. Jesus loved us to the end. In today's passage, Jesus gives us a new command: “Love one another, as I have loved you.”

I. I KNOW THOSE I HAVE CHOSEN (18a)

Look at verse 18a. Jesus says, *“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen.”* Jesus reminded his disciples that he had chosen them. Mark 3:13 says, “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.” They did not choose God. It was Jesus who had chosen them. It's true that the disciples responded to his calling. But it was by the grace of God they were chosen. Jesus says in John 15:16: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”* Likewise, all of us who believe in God came to Jesus by the grace of God. We did not choose him. He chose us.

How did Jesus choose his disciples? He didn't choose them based on their human ability or academic credential. Four of them were fishermen. One was a tax collector. One was a political fanatic. All of them were slow learners. Jesus did not choose them from among the teachers of the law or the Pharisees; instead, he chose those who had learning minds.

One day Jesus got up early and went to the Sea of Galilee. There he met a fisherman named Simon. This man looked tired and weary, because he had worked all night but caught nothing. Jesus said to him, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4). Simon could have ignored Jesus. After all, he was an expert fisherman, and Jesus was just a country preacher. Besides, it was not the right time for fishing. Yet Simon said, “But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” Then he caught a large catch of fish and the net began to break. Simon had “because-you-say-so” faith in Jesus. He had a great learning mind. Jesus changed his name to Peter. Because of their learning minds, the disciples could grow in faith. Their faith still speaks to us today. Many parents name their sons Peter, John or James. They call their dogs Nero and their salad Caesar.

God also chooses and calls us today to be disciples of Jesus. He wants us to be a source of blessing. He wants us to bear good fruit by living a life of faith and mission to

share the gospel of salvation with those who are still in darkness. This is the wonderful grace of God. May God help us to respond to his calling!

II. LOVE AND BETRAYAL (18-30)

Look at verse 18 again. Jesus says, *“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.’”* Jesus knew that Judas would betray him that very night. But he shared his bread with Judas. Sharing bread was symbol of a very close relationship. Jesus loved Judas to the end. Sadly Judas rejected Jesus’ love. He was going to do betray the Lord.

Betrayal is one of the most painful experiences one can have. Betrayal is rejecting one's love. It hurts one's heart deeply. Jesus experienced such pain. He knew that Judas would betray him, but Jesus still loved him to the end. In his love, Jesus did his best to help Judas to repent. He gave him several opportunities to come back to his senses. Jesus washed his feet. Jesus invited him to eat the Last Supper with him. He shared his bread with Judas.

What can we learn from Jesus who knew about his upcoming betrayal? First, he found comfort from the scripture. Based on God's word, Jesus decided to love Judas rather than letting the feeling of betrayal consume him. Second, he cared more about his disciples than himself. He knew that Judas' betrayal would be a devastating blow to his disciples. So he said, *“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am”* (19).

Look at verses 21-22. *After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.” His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.* The disciples were men of many mistakes and failures. But if they were sure of one thing, it was their loyalty to Jesus. To hear that one of them would betray Jesus was unthinkable. They saw Jesus who was troubled in spirit. They had never seen Jesus like this. The joyful dinner became somber. They all lost appetite. At this time, even the bigmouth Peter was at a loss to say anything. He just motioned to John, whispering to him, *“Ask him which one he means.”* Leaning back, John asked Jesus, *“Lord, who is it?”* (23-25)

Jesus didn't tell them directly that it was Judas. Instead he said, *“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*” (26). Jesus gave another opportunity for Judas to repent. Earlier Jesus had said, *“I am the bread of life”* (6:35). Bread is the symbol of Jesus' body and of the covenant of his redeeming love. When he gave the bread to Judas, Jesus was giving himself. Jesus loved him to the end so that he might repent and come to God. But Judas did not repent. When he refused to repent, Satan got hold of him. Verse 27 says that *“As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.”*

At this point, Jesus told Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” The disciples did not understand this. They thought that Jesus was telling him to buy something or give something to the poor, because Judas had charge of the money. Look at verse 30. *“As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”* There was still a piece of bread in his hand as he went out to darkness. Judas had rejected Jesus, the light of life. He chose to be a son of darkness. In the darkness of night, Judas went out to sell Jesus to the Pharisees for 30 pieces of silver. He thought it was a smart thing to do. But later when Judas saw that Jesus was sentenced to death, he was seized with remorse. Finally, he hanged himself (Mt 27:1-10). He did not repent. To the end, he refused to surrender his life to God. He took his own life as if he owned it.

What can we learn from Judas? Judas had followed Jesus for more than three years. But he never gave up his worldly desires, especially desire for money. He had one foot in the world and the other foot in Jesus. He was riding on the fence. He did not commit himself fully to the Lord. He thought he was smart. But his indecision gave an opportunity for Satan to enter his heart. This is a great warning for us to heed. We learn that we must respond to Jesus’ love with repentance and faith in him. We must follow him with full devotion and commitment so that we may not betray our Lord.

III. “LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU” (31-38)

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.”* He uses the word “glorify” several times in these verses. This word meant his own death and resurrection. Crucifixion was the most painful and shameful way to die; but his resurrection would be the glorious victory over sin and death.

When Judas left with the bread, it was a painful moment for Jesus. Still, Jesus did not dwell on one man’s the betrayal of his love. He had to take care of the 11 disciples. What did he do to help them? First, he told them, “My children, I will be with you only a little longer” (33). Jesus had to go away but his disciples were still young. Jesus called them “My children.” He loved them as a mother loves her children. Then he said in verse 34. *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”* Notice that this is a command, not a piece of advice or a mere recommendation. We cannot love others naturally, especially unlovely people. How could John love Peter, his fierce competitor? It was easier for him to hate Peter than love him. But Jesus told them to love one another.

In Greek language, there are at least three different words for love. The first is *eros* that is a love based on one’s physical desires. Many young people mean *eros* when they speak of love. In the New Testament, the other two Greek words for love appear frequently. The word *philia* refers to mental or brotherly love as in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. It is a give-and-take kind of love. The other love *agape* points to the love of God. *Agape* love is a sacrificial love. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son Jesus to die for our sins and to give us eternal life (3:16).

It is easy for us to love someone with erotic love or friendly love, as they are based on our sensual desire or a need for friendship. But it is not easy for us to love someone with *agape* love, because this love requires sacrifice. So which Greek word did Jesus use when he gave the new command? Look at verse 24 again: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Jesus used *agape* three times in this verse. So we can read the verse as, “A new command I give you. *Agape* love one another. As I have *agape* loved you, so you must *agape* love one another.” Jesus commands us to love one another with *agape* love. How can we love one another sacrificially and unconditionally? We know it is almost impossible for sinners like us to do this. In order to obey Jesus’ command, “Love one another,” we must fight a spiritual battle. We must struggle hard to overcome our sinful nature to do this. But human effort is not enough. We must first accept God’s love into our lives. We must remember how Jesus loved us, the unlovely sinners.

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.” A woman decided to divorce her husband. She came to her pastor with full of hatred. She said, “I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me.” The pastor gave her a suggestion. “Go home and act as if you really love him. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you’ve convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you’re getting a divorce. That will really hurt him.” The woman loved the idea. She went home and did all that for 2 months. Do you know what happened? She discovered that she really loved her husband. We learn that we should not ask whether we love our coworkers and if they love us. Instead, we make a decision to love one another, as Jesus loved us, and as he commanded us.

Then what does it mean practically to love someone? How can we *agape* love one another, which means, our love must be more than friendly or affectionate love. We can find an important clue in Jesus’ command. He says, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” Jesus commanded his disciples to love one another **as he loved them**. So we must remember how Jesus loved his disciples. What did Jesus do for them because he loved them? What did Jesus do to love us? Jesus loved his disciples by planting God’s hope and vision in them. The focus of his teaching was the kingdom of God. He could have done many things for them. They were poor. He could have helped them by teaching how to get rich quick. But he showed his love by teaching them the word of God. He washed their feet to teach them how to serve others. Finally, Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins and to give us eternal life. In this sense, to love someone is to help him or her to come to know the Lord and receive eternal life. This becomes very clear when we remember what Jesus did to his disciples after his resurrection. He appeared to them at the Sea of Galilee. Peter and the other disciples had gone to their old job of fishing. But that night, they caught nothing. They thought they had failed as disciples of Jesus as well as fishermen. But Jesus came to restore their love relationship with him. He said to Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?”

... Feed my sheep.” He repeated this three times (21:15-17). We learn that we can love one another by taking care of Jesus’ sheep as he had done.

Look at verse 35. *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* Up until this point, everyone knew they were Jesus’ disciples. They followed Jesus everywhere. They ate with Jesus. They laughed with Jesus. They witnessed and experienced his miracles personally. Everyone could see they were Jesus’ disciples. But now Jesus was going away. He would be no longer with him physically. So how would people know they were his disciples? Jesus did not give them new name tags that said, “Hi, my name is Peter. I am a disciple of Jesus.” Instead, he told them to love one another. By this, everyone would know that they were his disciples. So how can we prove ourselves to be Jesus’ disciples? We must love one another. That is the badge we wear as Jesus’ disciples. The only Bible that non-believers read is the life we live in Christ Jesus.

Look at verses 36-38. Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” He wasn’t listening when Jesus told them about his suffering, death and resurrection so many times. Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.” Peter didn’t like the answer. He was upset. He wanted to tell Jesus that he would remain loyal to him to the end. He said, *“Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you”* (37). Peter was emotional. He sounded courageous, but he had no courage to lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus knew that Peter would deny him before a servant girl. Nevertheless, Jesus loved him to the end.

Jesus answered, *“Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!”* (38). Jesus told Peter about his denial in advance to help him. Human loyalty has limitations (Jn 18:15-27). We betray our friends when we don’t really mean to do it. Some people even betray their wives or husbands. We should realize our human limitations. So what can we do to remain true to our Lord Jesus Christ? We must commit ourselves to him, not based on our human loyalty, but based on the word of God.

Jesus loved us to the end. He gave his life on the cross to set us free from the bondage of sin and death. Now he gives us a command, “Love one another, as I have loved you.” May God help us to commit our lives fully to our Lord Jesus and love one another by remembering how he loved us!