

## **“Love ... as I Have Loved You”**

5<sup>th</sup> Sun. of Easter – 05/17/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.  
Text: John 13:31-35 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 34, [Jesus said,] **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”**

### **Introduction**

- ✧ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*
- ✧ One of the Beatles' most popular songs was titled, “All you need is love.” And the basic premise of the lyrics to that song was this: There's nothing you can't do, as long as you have love!
  - ➔ Well friends, our world has certainly been operating for a long time now with a major shortage of love, because there is a lot that you and I personally, and that we as a world keep finding out, we cannot do.
  - ➔ Try as we might, we just can't seem to stop waging war against each other – as countries, as families, as other groups, and as individuals. Politically, no matter which party or administration currently has the official seat of power and advantage, we just can't get along. Parents and children; teachers and students; employers and employees; governments and citizens historically have all struggled to see eye to eye. Next door neighbors are often sparring against each other. Husbands and wives call each other the most unloving names.
- ✧ And the simple, straight forward diagnosis for these problems is what? A lack of love!
  - ➔ But that doesn't mean there is no love at all among us. We actually have a great deal of love all around us. The problem is that most of the time it is either the wrong kind of love or because we just don't understand what true love really is to begin with.
- ✧ And that's why Jesus here in our text today, on the night of His betrayal and arrest, gave His disciples and all of His believers from that night forward, a New Commandment; a God-glorifying display regarding His love and the love you and I are now to have in every aspect of our lives today and in our future.

### **I. God/Jesus is Glorified (vv. 31-32)**

- ✧ The setting of this Gospel Reading today is the Upper Room in Jerusalem, where Jesus hosted the Passover Meal for His twelve disciples.
  - ➔ Earlier, at the beginning of chapter 13, when the night began, we are told that Jesus “loved [His disciples] to the end” (Jn. 13:1). He showed this love to them by taking the role of a servant and washing each disciple's feet. So, the first lesson for us is this: true love for another is to put aside your own pride and pretense in humility and put the needs of those around you first.
- ✧ You see, this is what I was getting at earlier when I said that most of the time our problem is that we have around us and within each one of us the wrong kind of love. It's love for ourselves!
  - ➔ When couples are unhappy and struggling to stay together it's almost always because each one is thinking of him/herself first instead of the other. You name the conflict though: politics, family, work, school, friendships, etc. – the source of the problem is self-centered love; an unwillingness to stop thinking about how “I'm going to get what I want out of this situation first” and instead put the concerns; the needs and the situation of the others around me before me.
- ✧ This is ultimately why Jesus brought His disciples together on the night of today's text – to show them that He and His Father in heaven were intimately concerned about them; about their deepest need.

➔ And what was that need? It's the same as your deepest need right now today – the fact that you (and I) are steeped all the way to our deepest core with the exact opposite of true love. Yes, we are all filled with self-centered sin, just as those disciples before Jesus were that night. And because of that, none of them; none of us – no matter how much we might want to be cleansed of sin; no matter how hard we might be willing to work to overcome that sin, it is impossible for us to get rid of our sin on our own.

➔ When you get down to it, sin is a God-problem; a problem between us and God, where He is perfect and holy in every way, and we are not. The blame is with us, not God. And so, the only way to solve this God-problem we have is through a God-solution; a solution initiated by God; worked out through history by God; and accomplished only by God's almighty power and His unmatched, unconditional and perfect love – not for Himself, but His love for all of us undeserving sinners!

✘ That's what we see being kicked into gear right here in this Biblical text before us today, when Jesus says in verse 31, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him."

➔ When Jesus says, "Now..." He is referring to what just happened moments earlier between Him and His disciple, Judas. Verse 21 tells us that "Jesus was troubled in His spirit and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.'" Verse two told us that it was "during the supper" that the devil "put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot...to betray [Jesus]."

✘ This then was Judas' struggle with self-love. He didn't have the concern he should have had for those in need or those who worshipped Jesus in humility and faith. Instead John 12:6 tells us that Judas "was a thief" who "used to help himself to what was put into [the moneybag]" that covered the expenses for Jesus and His ministry.

➔ So, now in verses 27 and 30 just before our text, Jesus says to Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly." And then we're told that "he immediately went out."

➔ "Now..." Now in the midst of this great evil; this extreme expression of self-centered and sin-filled love, Jesus tells us that both He and God, the Father are glorified because this "now" is the beginning of God's plan to rescue and to save all of mankind from the sin, death and devil that our self-centered souls deserve.

## **II. Only Jesus could go to the cross (v.33)**

✘ And so Jesus loves the remaining disciples around Him in verse 33, starting off with an expression of His own deep love for them and all of His followers: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek Me, ... 'Where I am going you cannot come.'"

➔ This is where I was saying earlier that our God-problem can only be fixed by a God-solution. None of us – no human being ever in all of history; no one except for Jesus could ever go to the cross to pay the penalty for all sin of all time.

➔ Only He was and is sinless. Only Jesus lived this earthly life and kept every single Commandment from God to perfection. There was no need for Jesus to die to pay for His own sin because He had no sin.

➔ Yet, He humbled Himself in love because He was more concerned about you and me and all the souls of all mankind than He was about the great shame and the extreme physical suffering that He would endure in going to the cross in our place. The worst that He endured though was when His own Father turned His back against Him as He hung on that cross because He had become the physical manifestation of all sin of all time. That's the penalty; that's the pain that should have been ours; that we all deserve!

- ✘ And yet that is Jesus' greatest act of selfless and sacrificial love. Only Jesus was worthy and only Jesus was able to show us there on the cross and in His resurrection on the third day what true, perfect love is really all about.

➔ Later, in his first letter, John tells us this very thing, saying, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the [substitutionary sacrifice] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 Jn. 4:7-11).

### III. Love ... as I have loved you (v.34-35)

- ✘ That's exactly where Jesus and His love takes His disciples and us today in this text. He says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (v.34).

➔ You see, the Old Commandment from Leviticus 19:18, which sums up Commandments 4 through 10, said this, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge" (that's self-love; that's loving yourself before all others), ... but you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This was the best any human being could ever hope to do before Jesus came along – to at least try to "match" the love we have for ourselves in how we love others.

- ✘ But now Jesus, as the only perfect Son of God and the only perfect human being, gives us Himself as the basis; as the foundation; as the standard for what true love really is all about.

➔ I mean, Jesus never said while He was on the cross, or ever for that matter, "You know, that Keith Besel guy ... he doesn't deserve My love anymore, so that's it. I'm done with him." If He did, no one ever would receive His love because no one ever deserves it!

➔ But Jesus' unconditional love is in itself a renewing power by which you and I are now, not only cleansed entirely of the guilt of our sin and it's deserving punishment, but we are also able now, because of His love, to love as God intends for us to love. 1 John 4:19 says it this way, "We love because He first loved us."

- ✘ You see what this now means, my dear Christians? This selfless; this sacrificial love from Jesus is now a dominant characteristic within us as His people. It is to be a core quality in all people who believe in Jesus. If Jesus' love for us is not evident when people meet us, interact with us, watch us and think of us, then it could be rightly asked, is that person truly a Christian; a Christ-follower at all?

➔ Jesus said in verse 35, "By this" (love from Jesus) "all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have (that) love for one another."

### Conclusion

- ✘ It all begins though with Jesus' love shown to you and me. Without that we are only able to think of ourselves; only able to bring shame to God. But it's Jesus' love, expressed in His selfless sacrifice and His glorious resurrection, that saves us and makes us His. It's His love, now showing through us as His beloved children, that glorifies God in the eyes of the world.

➔ Think of it this way: Jesus' love is the light that shines into and does away with the darkness of all the evil; all the sin; and even all of the death that we see around us every day. His love is the only true answer to this love-depraved world in which we live.

➔ So, at least the refrain of that Beatles' song was correct, "All you need is love" – that is, Jesus' perfect, saving love.

- ✠ It's by His love; by His grace alone, that you and I are now the reflectors; the lanterns through which His loving light shines for others in this world to see Him; to love Him and to be saved by Him.
- ✠ Christ is risen. *He is risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.*