**Love one Another** May 18, 2025 Jn 13:31-35

## “***A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***

## Recall when working for CN, on a week-long leadership course and part of this course was spending an afternoon watching a movie – (Bridge over River Kwai - based on a true story)

* The purpose of watching this movie was to identify certain leadership qualities which were highlighted during our discussion following the movie.
* The only purpose for this exercise was to help us managers understand different leadership traits. There was certainly no particular religious intent.
* But to look back on this movie, one can see very clearly a religious take that mirrors the words of Jesus in today’s gospel – “Love one another . . .as I have loved you, so you must love one another.
* Movie was about a Japanese labour camp for prisoners of war during 2nd world war. The Japanese were building a railroad through the jungle and were using these POW’s for their labour

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resource.

* The Scottish soldiers, who were forced by their Japanese captors to labour on this jungle RR, had degenerated to barbarous behaviour, but one afternoon something happened:
* During the tool check, it was discovered that there was a shovel missing. The Japanese officer in charge became enraged & demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun & threatened to kill them **all** on the spot. Obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, & beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse & carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. There had been a miscount at the first check point.
* The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others!. . This incident had a profound effect. . .

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* The men changed dramatically & began to treat each other like brothers.
* When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, who looked like human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors. . . (and instead of wanting revenge & attacking their captors) they insisted: “***No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness***.”
* That is the kind of power that comes from Sacrificial love.
* That is exactly the kind of love that God has exercised for us in Jesus Christ – a sacrificial love that **has** the power to transform the world.
* But when the world cannot appreciate its state of need & desperation, it also cannot appreciate the sacrifice that was made.
* The result unfortunately is that this transformation is lost for many.
* But that does not change the fact that this sacrifice **was** made for all, whether we receive it or not.
* It does not change the fact that God’s love was given for all, even those who

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turn away from it & are really lost.

* But those of us who claim we understand & appreciate the sacrificial love that was given for us – it is to us that Jesus is speaking.
* It is this transforming love that, above all else, is supposed to be the hallmark of a Christian.
* Jesus said: ***As I have loved you, so you must love one another***.
* How are we to love each other as Jesus loved us?
* I don’t think we are expected to give our lives up to torture to prove to another that we love them.
* What Jesus did was a once only thing – He paid the price for all our sins for all time and that is something that can never be repeated and never has to be repeated.
* That is why it is called the finished work of the cross.
* But, as Christians, we are surely expected to show a Christ-like love for others.
* What does that love look like?
* There are many references in Scripture

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that point to this Christ-like love, but I’ll choose one that is particularly to the point.

***If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*** (I John 4:19-21)

* Loving each other is not something that is optional – it is a command.
* Our call to **love** each other is the sign of our being transformed from the love of God that is in us.
* It is only when we love each other that we are an effective witness to the world.
* Sometimes Christian communities can be the worst examples for the witness of Christ’s love.
* I wonder how many Christians come to church on a Sunday morning grumbling because there is some thing in their little world that is not pleasing to them.
* Not only grumbling in general, but sometimes specifically against another Christian who may even be sitting in the

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same building with them.

* Even worse, when it is behind that person’s back.
* I’m afraid that is not Christ-like, nor is this in any way living out the command that Jesus gave us to love each other.
* This doesn’t mean that we have to just smile & take it when someone does something that is offensive.
* I think the primary problem is that we don’t understand what it means to love another.
* We don’t understand because we are tempered by everything around us that suggests that love is some passive thing, & that it is only a feeling that we have towards another.
* That is not the kind of love that Jesus speaks about.
* While love is compassionate & always respects the dignity of every human being, it is also something that is active.
* “***God is love***,” we read in the Bible, therefore the kind of love that Jesus is talking about must be rooted in God Himself.
* I recall being at a marriage conference

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almost 50 years ago and seeing a poster in the conference room that said: “***Love is a Decision”***.

* That was a real challenge to me at the time, but the fact is that love is about making a decision - It is about choosing
* It involves truth & standing for truth, which can sometimes even take us down a confrontational road.
* There is a saying: “***He who stands for nothing, will fall for anything***.”
* Above all, this love involves choosing to be in relationship with Jesus & choosing to follow Him.
* And in that relationship, as we grow more Christ-like, we discover that love begins to look more like truth than just sentimental, syrupy feelings.
* Love does involve our emotions, but it is so much, much more.
* It is being anchored in the truth of God, & then living out of that truth.
* I believe C.S. Lewis said it best: “***Love is much more stern & splendid than mere kindness.***”
* I believe a first step to loving as Jesus commanded is to be honest & truthful

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with each other.

* We are all different and we all have our faults, but, even with our differences, we are called to be reconciled with each other.
* Being honest with someone & confronting them when they are wrong is loving them.
* Being angry with them & talking behind their backs is not loving them.
* How do we live in the kind of love Jesus calls us to?
* It is being rooted in His truth & choosing to follow Him.
* It is being honest & transparent with ourselves & acknowledging our own faults & shortcomings.
* And while we might have made that choice to follow Jesus, we know also that we will still fail miserably, many, many times.
* I think we can best understand from another’s example.
* If we were to read a couple more verses beyond today’s assigned gospel passage where Jesus gave this command to love each other, we would read where Peter

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asks Jesus where He is going, & then makes the infamous statement that he would lay down his life for Jesus.

* Jesus responds to Peter by telling him that rather than lay down his life, he will actually deny Him three times.
* I think that here is the greatest clue
* Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He also knows us better than we know ourselves.
* But the point is that Peter’s desire i**s** to follow Jesus, & he makes that choice.
* What Peter said, he surely meant at the time.
* But as he embarked on the journey, he discovered that he wasn’t as strong and as brave as he thought he was.
* We happen to know the rest of the story.
* It is similar for each of us.
* We have to start out with a desire to follow Jesus, & even though we make that choice to follow Him, we will fail time & time again.
* And, like Peter, it is from our failures, that we grow stronger and are more able to exhibit the kind of love that Jesus is talking about.

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* ***As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***
* To exhibit the kind of sacrificial love that Jesus did, or even the Scottish prisoner in the Japanese POW camp is a very high calling.
* Not many of us will ever reach that level.
* But like everything in our Christian walk, it is a journey that we travel.
* And the important thing is not that we have arrived & can boast how much like Christ we are, but rather that we can boast that we desire to follow Christ & are on that journey.
* The most important thing on that journey is that:
* **When** we fail to love as Jesus called us to
* **When** we fail to stand when we should
* **When** we fail to be honest with others as we should -
* The real important thing is that we know & accept the sacrificial love that Jesus had for us & we can turn to the cross, acknowledge our failures, & accept His forgiveness for them.

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* That way, we will always be growing more & more into the likeness of Christ.
* That is really the kind of love Jesus calls us to.