

"What's New About the New Commandment?"

John 13

As we have been studying 'Love One Another' in the Bible we began with Jesus' answer regarding the greatest commandment. For which he said more than once,

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

Then we looked at Deut. 6:3-5, the reference for loving God with all our being and explored what that meant for Israel going into the promised land and the connections it makes for us. Then we went to the second greatest commandment in Lev. 19:18 two weeks ago, Love others as you love yourself, and again made the spiritual connections on what we're to do.

Last week we looked at another time Jesus gave that answer in Luke 10 to the 'expert' in the Law, this time showing us with how the parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of what loving others looks like by showing compassion to those God puts into our path that have a need; our neighbours.

Now that we've got a good handle on that we come to John 13 and Jesus tells His disciples in vv.34-35,

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

A new commandment? But it sounds like the old one. What's new about this new but not new commandment?

As always, to understand what Jesus means by a new commandment we have to explore the context in which He has said this. He defined this new commandment of love by "as I have loved you." And only moments ago here at the last Passover, Jesus had washed His disciples' feet. After He washed their feet, He said this in v.12,

Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

What Jesus did was something new, something that He had never done for them before as an illustration of what He's going to do for them in a few hours. So if we're to love one another as Jesus loves we have to love each other

With a New Standard – Like Jesus
(13:2, 12-17, 34)

Jesus raised the bar of love here by going lower. Back in v.1 we read,

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. ² The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

It was customary to have your feet washed when you entered a home. Typically a Gentile servant was available to do this. Jews rarely washed each other's feet. And a Rabbi could never ask his disciples to wash His feet. It was too humiliating. So when John the Baptist said of Jesus in John 1:27

²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the things of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

He meant Jesus is so much greater than anyone that no one is worthy to even be His servant. Yet, here their Rabbi, their Master and Lord does something none of them would do. Jesus only wanted His disciples here and so no servants. Peter (possibly purposefully to show how humble he was) sat in what's called the servant's seat across from John [show slide] and Jesus. Jesus comes around the table and to Peter last who, recognizes his failure to be the servant [because he should have washed their feet] and is horrified that Jesus should stoop so low. Thus his initial rejection.

So this is new. The master serving the followers. The Master cleansing the disciples of their dirt. The Master doing the cleaning by going low. They wouldn't understand this until after Jesus died and rose that Jesus, as Paul put it so brilliantly in Phil. 2,

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!

The 'cleansing' language is intentional because the disciples who are 'clean', i.e. because of their faith in Jesus, only need ongoing cleansing of current sins. Whereas the Judas' who reject Jesus aren't 'clean' because they've never accepted Jesus' sacrifice for their sins. They try to do it themselves but they are incapable of doing that. Only the sinless Son of Man can do that.

And Jesus lowered Himself as an example of the full extent of His love. He left His glory behind, became totally submissive to God's plan and the Spirit's leading, first in becoming human, second to serve people, third to allow Himself to be crucified all so that we could be forgiven of our sins.

So the example for us is to love others by being willing to do whatever it takes to help them know Jesus and grow in Jesus. Taking on the form of a servant. Willing to sacrifice our own wills so that others are drawn closer to Jesus.

The disciples have not understood this yet. They are still hoping Jesus will overthrow the Romans and step on the throne and establish the Kingdom of God on earth where James and John want the seats of power beside Him. And so do the others. They had this argument back in Mark 10

before Jesus asked them what they were arguing about. He said this to them about wanting to be lords and masters over others:

10:42 You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

This is how Jesus' followers love others. Jesus' standard is very high. It means to go low. What else is 'new' about the New Commandment? We are to love one another

With a New Power – in Jesus **(13:3, 13:36-14:4)**

At the beginning of John 13, John prefaces all that Jesus is about to do with this amazing intro. Almost like slow motion so we understand fully what was going on. Listen again,

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. ² The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

Jesus had no problem serving His followers – even one who will turn on Him – because He knows God is in control of His life and that He belongs to God and that when He dies He will be in God's presence. Man, if only we had such assurances that God was in control of our lives and that everything we do will be rewarded and every time we are rejected God will handle it and that even when we die we have the assurance we will be with God! But we do, don't we! This is how we can love others because Jesus Himself empowers us by His Spirit to show His love.

A few minutes later Jesus will tell all his disciples these truths:

15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

These 11 will receive the Holy Spirit in 40+ days. They will do amazing things for others. They will start to love others like Jesus because Jesus dwells in them by His Spirit. And now He dwells in us, empowering us to do what we can't do in the flesh. If we say things like, 'Well I can't forgive what they did', we're lying because we can in Christ. We choose not too. We're choosing not to humble ourselves like Christ and serve those who hurt us. It's not believe in yourself; it's believe in Jesus who as Paul said in Gal. 2:20 dwells in us.

²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

When we live by faith we let Jesus love others through us. Even if it's not returned, God knows. We're in His hands. He sees everything that we do and is done to us. We can be rejected because we're accepted by God. We are in God and He in us and we will return to Him. This is what Jesus tries to tell Peter except he's not ready to hear it. Notice when Jesus tells the 11 (Judas has left) in vv.34-35 that they are to love one another as Jesus has loved them, Peter didn't hear that because he was too focused on what Jesus said before that in v.33.

³³ *"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.* ³⁴ *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

³⁶ *Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."*

Jesus told the Jews these same words back in 7:33,

³³ *Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."*

Which surely bothered Peter but Jesus reassures him you will come to me later. Peter (and the others) don't want Jesus to go because they still don't get the death/sacrificial part must come before the conquering part of Jesus' ministry. Peter thinks he is willing and able to save Jesus from death so their kingdom dreams don't die. He says here

³⁷ *Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"*

So Jesus reassures him and the rest [ignore chapter divisions!]

14:1 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going."*

Can you and I love others unconditionally, even if they hurt us? Yes, because we have Jesus' presence and power with us to help us love and serve the way Jesus does. He's in you and you are in Him and one day we'll be in His presence.

And the other thing that is new but not new is we are to love one another ...

With a New Purpose – for Jesus **(13:31-38)**

³¹ *When he [Judas] was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.*

The death and resurrection of Jesus will glorify Him because only then do we understand the full extent of His love. And God is glorified too because it was His plan to save us through the sacrifice of His Son. And now it's our purpose in life to marvel at God's amazing love for us so much so that we live to make Jesus known. To tell people about how great God says they are. To live for Him and not to build our own mini kingdoms where we're in control over others.

Again, later that night Jesus prayed to God in 17:1,

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began

Jesus knew His death would result in God restoring His glory and they would both be exulted because their followers would understand the full extent of His love. That's why we can love others like Jesus does. To raise our standard of love by going lower. By remaining in Him so that He empowers us to love and serve the way we know we can't on our own. And when we do we make Him known.

³⁴ *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

^{17:20} *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

When we love each other the way Jesus does, when we love the unsaved the way Jesus does, people will know who God is because of how low we're willing to go to help people see God in us and through us.

Jesus calls us 'little children' in John 13:33. It's amazing how confident we become in life because we know our parents, siblings, and grandparents love us unconditionally when we're loved and accepted by friends, teachers, coaches, etc. But they can't always be with us but Jesus is. His love is greater than theirs. He abides in us and asks us to maintain that close relationship because that's how we can go low and love and serve those who may not reciprocate back. And while that's hard, it's okay. We're secure in God. We know He's in control and we're going to Him one day. Love one another as Jesus loves us.

* * * * *

If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net