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*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34*

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## *How Jesus Loves: A New Command*

We've been preaching through the Upper Room Discourse. Pastor Tom talked about Jesus predicting the betrayal of Judas and Peter's denial. Sandwiched in between those verses is what we'll see here today. It's the new command that Jesus gives to the eleven disciples that are left. Sometimes called "the faithful eleven." And what is interesting is that Jesus talks about love

We see love a lot in these chapters. In these verses at the very beginning of Chapter 13, it says, "Having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them to the very end" When He washes their feet, he talks about betrayal and denial. He instructs them. He cares for them. When Judas leaves the room we see a dramatic change in events. Jesus says to Judas, "What you're about to do, do quickly," and now the cross is in full sight for Jesus. He's drawing near. It's in full sight.

Jesus explains what is about to happen. John 13:31 "When he [Judas] 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 by Him at once." As He goes to the cross, Jesus says He is glorified. And John 17:5 reads, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

The Father and the Son, glorify each other. Although they are distinct, they are one in essence. I don't know if you've ever done this, but when you contemplate the cross I ask myself, "do I admire Jesus, who gave his life up?" Or, "Do I admire God, who gave up his only begotten Son?" It's impossible to decide one or the other. Christ the Son is glorified and the Father is glorified in the Son. And the Son is glorified in the Father. You can't separate the Triune God. Even at the cross, they are glorifying one another.

We look at the events of the cross and perhaps think it doesn't look like glory. It looks like the opposite of glory. And that's the wonder of God's glory. We heard testimony earlier today from someone who witnessed the death of his friend. The friend saw and shared a glimpse of the glory. John 1:14, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." It's about glory.

But then Jesus says, in 13:33, 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. He says the same thing in John 7:33. "I'm going away.... And when you look for me, you will not find me." Jesus says nearly identical words in these verses. "I'm going away," In 13:33 he does not say, "When you look for me, you won't find me." But says "you can't come with me." But adds, "you will come later at a later time."

Jesus goes on in verses 34 and 35 and says, "A new commandment 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." He repeats himself three times. In these three repetitions, we have *what* we are to do, *how* we to love, and *why*.

What.

*What is this new command?* It says it's a new command but on the surface, it seems like Jesus is replacing the old command. "Love your neighbor as yourself." But that is not what he's doing. Jesus is giving greater depth and understanding to this command. It's not "new" with respect to time. "This command has been around for generations, beginning in Leviticus. There's a great quote from a commentator that reads, "The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, yet profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice."

*Love one another.* Is love evident in your life? Is it the main evidence in your Christian life? I like to ask people quite often, "How is your faith? How is your walk with God going? This is a great conversation starter. On a scale of 1 to 10, where is your walk with God? And most people, being humble, come in at 5 or 6. No one has ever said 10, which is pretty good. But the follow-up question is, "Why did you pick that number?"

Most of us give content-related answers. We talk about what we are reading, or a conference we might be attending, or something tangible we are *doing*. We don't respond by talking about how *loving* we are. We don't say that our love is growing for our family or co-workers. What we do matters, but only to the extent of how much we *love*.

Peter here is the same way. Yeah, love, love, love, but let's talk about the important stuff. What's going to happen? Where are you going? We are the same, aren't we? More concerned with the externals. Focused on details rather than with on how we love each other. God's plan is that we love. Jesus says, "Love one another."

How.

*How are we to love one another?* "As I have loved you, love one another." You notice it's not a generalization of love. He's not talking to those outside of the faith family. No, he's talking to those who are in the family of believers of faith. Jesus before said, "Love your neighbor as

yourself.” That’s how we ought to love other people. Here he expands on that by saying “Love like I love.” That’s a very different love. The basis for that love is very different. He sets a new standard for how we are to love one another.

How did Jesus love?

*Selflessly.* He wasn’t looking for a return, or what people would give back to him. So many times our love is built around what we will we will get back. That’s not the way Jesus loved., “For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me” (Romans 15:3). Our love is driven by our own needs, isn’t it?

Jesus says, “I want you to love like I have loved you.” He was willing to put aside his own need. Jesus was hungry, he hadn’t eaten, but he went to pray and the crowds followed him. And Jesus looked upon the crowd and had compassion on them, they were sheep without a shepherd. That is selfless love. He forgot about his own needs. Jesus was always looking to please the Father, always looking to love those who were broken. It was selfless love.

*Sacrificially.* The cross perfectly defines love. He showed his love by giving himself up for us on the cross. He took the weight of our sins on himself. When we put our faith in him, we can live as He lived. Jesus was willing to carry the weight of our sin on himself, and he would lay down his life. “But God demonstrates his love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). For us. This type of love takes on pain. The world’s love walks away when it sees or experiences pain. The world walks away when it gets tough. But Jesus’ love was a sacrificial love.

*With Understanding.* One commentator says he loved “with his eyes wide open.” You’ve heard the phrase Love is blind? Not here. No. Jesus loved with his eyes wide open. Jesus loved not because of the wonderful job the disciples were doing. One has just walked out the door. One is about to deny him. And they are all about to scatter and leave him.

And he loved them. Jesus fully understands you and me. And even with this understanding of who we really are, Jesus continues to express and pour out his love. His love is active, not just words. John said this in 1 John 3:18, “Little Children, let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and truth.” Jesus’ love was active. He proved his love. We see it at the beginning of this passage when he got down on his knees and he washed the disciple’s feet. Jesus said, I’m going to the cross. And He went to the cross. He didn’t just say the words. He was active in how he loved. “Greater love has no one than this, To lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:14). That’s how Jesus loved.

Jesus could have talked to each of the eleven disciples left in the room and specifically told them and reminded them how he loved them personally. “Matthew, You remember when I met you? What were you doing?” “I was a tax collector for the Romans.” “Remember how I invited you in?

Remember how I loved you? Remember how I went to your house right away and no one else understood that?" Jesus could have gone around the room to each of them and reminded them of how he loved them over the years. Jesus says, "love one another as I have loved you." He showed us by his example.

*Christ's love compels us.* (2 Corinthians 5:14). He loved first and therefore we love. If we are not overcome by the love of Christ in our lives I don't know how we're able to love anyone else. Are you overwhelmed by Christ's love for you and what he's done for you? It's our motivation, but it's also our power, our source, and our strength. Jesus says, Here's a new commandment. Not a suggestion, but a commandment. Love like I have loved you, That's an impossible task.

Which is why Jesus continues in the next few chapters telling us that we are not alone. He will send the Holy Spirit. When you're connected to the Vine, I'll give you a power source and strength. And then, of course, in John 17, he talks about that as well. That's how we are to love like Christ loved, which is a perfect love.

Why.

*Why love one another?* Verse 35. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." In John chapters 12 through 17, The word *world* is used some 40 different times. It's not used in this verse, but it's the same idea. He wants his disciples to go out into the world to *show* who Jesus is.

By this, by *how* you love one another, "everyone will know that you are my disciples." And the key is if you love one another. "Jesus gives the world authority to judge our authenticity on the basis of our observable love for each other. Jesus gives the world authority to look in on us, and they have the right to say "hypocrites" if they do not see love toward each other."

Francis Schaeffer says this, "The importance of this new command cannot be understated. Forgives the world in observable love, a love that is actually visible and tangible. It is not a mystical out there "think" but is something that is observable. There is something about the way that we treat each other that creates, with those looking in, a desire that I must have what they have." That is my testimony.

I grew up in the church. I didn't become a believer until I was 17 years old because there wasn't a lot of love expressed. And as a boy looking on, I thought, *Why would I want that? I already feel judged at school and in life at home. Why would I want to come to church and feel judged even more?* But when I was 17, I saw some Christians who lived out this type of love, and said, "I want what you have." And they begin to share the gospel. Evangelism begins with the fellowship and the love of believers. Our witness to the world begins here, in our relationships here. John 17:21 Jesus prays and says to His Father, "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.* The world looks on and sees our unity, our love for one another, and our willingness to love

one another. Our love for one another makes an invisible God visible. You may think that's a stretch. Let's look at 1 John 4:12, "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." The world will see when we love each other. When we love each other as he loved. And our source is the power of the Holy Spirit through our connection to the Vine. We are immersed into His presence. His thoughts are in us and transform and renew our minds. He is sanctifying us. And we need this. We can't just do this apart from Him. We can have His strength. "I'm in you." We can't just tune our lives to our own will. We need to tune our lives according to His love.

Let me demonstrate. Let's start a Cary Alliance *mass* choir—meaning, you are all in the choir. Are you ready for this? You are all going to sing. Don't sing softly. I want you to sing loud and proud. I'm going to count to three and I want everyone to sing. Ready? One, two, three.  
[Congregation: "Aaah"].

That was not a good start. But that's okay. That is the first time we have ever sung together as a choir. It wasn't good because we were tuning ourselves to our own voice—to what we think. If we are to love like Jesus and be witnesses of love in the world, we need to tune our love to *His* love. That is how we get unity.

Let's try it again. But Donna is going to give us a chord. [Donna plays a chord] One, two, three.  
[Congregation: "Aaah"]. That was awesome, only the second try and it sounded incredible. We are tuning in to something outside of ourselves--tuning into a common chord brings unity to this diverse group of voices. Now let's set that chord to a melody. This time we're going to sing "aaah," but we're going to continue into *Amazing Grace*. Ready? One, two, three.  
[Congregation: "Amazing Grace"].

The more we tune into the Spirit and into loving God and pouring out our love to God and he pours into us, the more we are unified with the love that is in the Father and is in us. It's a beautiful thing. The world will look on that and say, "I want what you have." That's beautiful. The Great Commission, "Go out into the world" starts with, "love one another and everyone will know that you are my disciples." How will the world see this love? You know, it used to be when someone had a crisis in their life or things were going badly, they would come to the church. That's not the case anymore. We're called to go out to love each other in the world. I believe this is the best expression of being able to love each other. How do we do that? Small groups are so important for this. We love each other and serve together. And as we serve people look see and notice how we love.

## Small Groups

Small groups are an important way in which we can demonstrate love to one another. [Video plays—"We should be a missional community that serves, works, and loves together. Jesus did not send his disciples out alone. Jesus said, it is by our love for one another that the world will know that we are his disciples. This is how the world will see that the gospel changes us. Jesus's

*intent is for us to be a community on mission, not doing missions all alone. (paraphrased) End Video]*

This New Command is foundational to what Jesus wants from us as believers. There's a guy named Benny and a friend invited him to a small group meeting. Benny was a cool guy, very worldly. And he goes to this men's small group and Benny is blown away. He yearned for fellowship like this. He gave his life to the Lord. That was in 2016 and Benny is still walking with the Lord. We need more stories like that. This is our call.

A couple of months ago, a man I know needed a gym for his son's basketball team. And I thought, *If our small group were to host this basketball team, they could practice here!* So I texted our small group and explained the situation—eight weeks every Tuesday night—within an hour, our small group responded. We started this two weeks ago. We make cookies. Serve Gatorade. We host them.

Why? Because we are demonstrating love. They are still trying to figure out why. I think we're going to do a year-end dinner on the last night. Why? Because they'll go home and tell their parents they are practicing in this place. "They gave us cookies and made us a meal." "What? This is a church?" We need to think outside the box.

Two more. April 8<sup>th</sup>. We are hosting an "eggstravaganza." Egg hunts and games for kids. A lot of people come from the community. Bring your kids. But if your kids are grown, come anyway. It's not for you. Your opportunity is to come here and love. Come and make connections. It speaks volumes to a world that is in the loneliest time in our history.

April 21<sup>st</sup>. Grant Spalding hosts the international lunches with Bridges, part of CRU. We have an opportunity on April 21st to make a bunch of food and go down to NC State and serve the internationals. We need people and we need a lot of food. We need people to serve food, but we also need people just to interact and get to know the students. "This is how the world will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

*May we be a people who see Christ, love how we express that love, and may we look for opportunities. We thank you for your love, your kindness, and your grace that you poured on all of us. We are so thankful. We live in the light of your grace. I pray that the power of your Holy Spirit will help us to think of ways that we can express love. Give us creativity, strength, power, and wisdom. We want to see you be glorified more and more by more people knowing who you are. Amen.*

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Edited by ckg