

The New Commandment

Series: His Last Day

John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21a, 23, 24a; 15:12-15; 16:27

March 27, 2022

Welcome again to worship.

This year during Lent, our series comes from a meme:

Sometimes I joke about what I'd do if I had one day left to live. Eat junk food, go crazy, etc. Today it hit me: Jesus knew. And He washed feet.

In this series "His Last Day," we are looking at some very important chapters in the Gospel of John, chapters 13-16. They are often called the Upper Room Discourse, for Jesus taught His disciples in the Upper Room the night before He was crucified.

So, turn to page 5 in your bulletin, or if you are online, grab your spiritual journal, your Bible, and turn to John 13.

A man and his wife are awakened at 3 o'clock in the morning by a loud pounding on the back door. The man got up and went to the door where a drunken stranger, standing in the pouring rain, was asking for a push.

"Not a chance," said the husband, "It is three o'clock in the morning." He slammed the door and returned to bed.

"Who was that?" asked his wife.

"Just some drunk guy asking for a push," he answered.

"Did you help him?" she asked.

"No. I did not. It is three o'clock in the morning and it is pouring rain outside!"

His wife said, "Don't you remember about three months ago when we broke down and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him, and you should be ashamed of yourself!"

The man did as he is told, got dressed and went out into the pouring rain. He called out into the dark, "Hello. Are you still there?"

"Yes," came back the answer.

"Do you still need a push?" called out the husband.

"Yes! Please!" came the reply from the darkness.

"Where are you?" asked the husband.

"Over here! On the swing!"

As I said a couple weeks ago, the majority of the Upper Room Discourse is teaching. In fact, there is more teaching here – 4 chapters – than the 3 chapters of the Sermon on the Mount.

Today, we are going to be skipping throughout each of the 4 chapters to examine a recurring lesson Jesus taught His disciples, one that we must learn.

Thirteen hundred years before Jesus' Last Day, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the basic principles relating to ethics and worship that play a fundamental role in Judaism and Christianity.

Then, during His Last Day, Jesus said this in John 13:34:

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other.¹

So, point #1 is this: **the new commandment is love.**

¹ John 13:34a (NLT2)

This coincides well with what we call the Great Commandment He said spoken just 2 days prior:

“And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”²

This idea to Love God, Love People, is the basis of our lives as Christians.

The Ten Commandments are an injunction—and a God-given one. But Jesus is an injunction plus an inspiration. To follow an injunction is to obey imposed morality, but to follow a Person and do the things He does is an inspired morality. One is legalism, the other love. One binds you, the other frees you. One makes you feel trampled, the other relaxed and spontaneous.³

Second, it is Jesus love.

The second half of verse 34:

Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.⁴

To love others was not a new commandment⁵, but to love others as much as Christ loved others was revolutionary. Now we are to love others based on Jesus’ sacrificial love for us. Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ; it will also keep believers strong and united in a world hostile to God. Jesus was a living example of God’s love, as we are to be living examples of Jesus’ love.⁶

In a few hours, Judas would betray Him with a kiss, Peter would crumble under pressure, and the rest would run away in fear. Fully aware of these events, Jesus knelt before Judas and lovingly washed his feet, as He did Peter’s and the rest. It’s called unconditional love, Jesus love.

And because of that love, we are to love others with Jesus love, the same kind of love that he would demonstrate in about 18 hours when He went to the cross to die for us.

Therefore, when a person or institution has failed you, love as Jesus loved. When you have been mistreated or your name dragged through the mud, love as Jesus loved. When you meet someone who is far from God, love as Jesus loved.

And when you do this, then the 3rd point occurs.

It proves who we are.

John 13:35:

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.⁷

A little girl, on the way home from church, turned to her mother and said, “Mommy, the preacher’s sermon this morning confused me.”

The mother said, “Oh! Why is that?”

The girl replied, “Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?”

“Yes, that’s true,” the mother replied.

“He also said that God lives in us. Is that true, too?”

Again, the mother replied, “Yes.”

² Mark 12:30-31 (NLT2)

³ Every Day with Jesus Daily Bible, John 13:34

⁴ John 13:34b (NLT2)

⁵ See Leviticus 19:18

⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

⁷ John 13:35 (NLT2)

“Well,” said the little girl. “If God is bigger than us and He lives in us, wouldn’t He show through?”

I like that little girl’s way of putting it. If God lives in us, then there’s no way of keeping him from “showing through.” That’s the essence of Christian living: living a life of love in such a way that people around us will see God in our lives.

Fourth, it is obedience.

Turn over to John 14:15. Jesus told His disciples:

*If you love me, obey my commandments.*⁸

Then verse 24:

*Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me.*⁹

The kind of love Jesus talked about is an obedient love.

Often times, we are hesitant in our obedience. We prefer a “once save, always saved” theology or a works-righteousness theology that says as long as you have been baptized, you’re going to heaven.

Jesus teaches something very different. Love requires obedience. It requires doing His commandments, and that is love.

John Wesley bridged the gap between holiness and outward works by talking about “scriptural holiness,” where we become holy through our pursuit of the Lord in our inner lives that then is manifested in our outer lives as expressions of holiness in love, justice, mercy, and truth.

Love is obedience.

Fifth, it requires submission.

John 14:21a:

*Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me.*¹⁰

True Christianity is a submissive religion. We submit to the Lord all of ourselves: our future, our relationships, our family, our day-to-day, our will to the Father.

We need to hear that over and over again in our modern American world, where you can do whatever you want. America today is the antithesis of Christian discipleship. We are bombarded by messages of self-will and determination, when the Gospel tells us something entirely different.

*Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.”*¹¹

Your daily, if not hourly, even by the minute practice and prayer should be: Not my will, but Thine be done.”

The new commandment of love requires submission. It is not about you. It is always about God.

Sixth, it is reciprocated.

Jesus told His disciples that when they loved Him, that love was reciprocated. Let’s look at three verses. First, John 14:12:

⁸ John 14:15 (NLT2)

⁹ John 14:24a (NLT2)

¹⁰ John 14:21a (NLT2)

¹¹ Matthew 16:24-25 (NLT2)

And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”¹²

Then verse 23:

Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.”¹³

Finally, John 16:27:

for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from God.¹⁴

Jesus indicates a reciprocal nature of love. When we love, God loves us.

This does not mean that God will not love us until we love Christ, for then we would never experience the love in the Gospel which has God loving us before we were saved. What it means is that the love of God will be better experienced and realized when we love Christ. A boy may love a girl greatly, but until she accepts his invitation to love, she will not experience his love. So, it is with God and loving Jesus.

Friends, there is the knowledge that God loves you; then there is the experience that God’s loves you, and we experience best when we love and obey His Son.

Finally, it makes us friends.

John 15:12-15 reads:

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.¹⁵

Jesus has now admitted us into a state of the most intimate fellowship with Himself. We are His friends if we love and obey. You can be friends with the President. You can be friends with Elon Musk. You can be friends with Joey Votto or Joe Burrow. You can be friends with a famous movie star. But it will never as good as being Jesus’ friend.

Growing up, I never liked the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” not because of the words, but the way the old ladies in our church sang it. But once I grew up, I looked at the words:

*What a Friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,*

¹² John 14:21 (NLT2)

¹³ John 14:23 (NLT2)

¹⁴ John 16:27 (NLT2)

¹⁵ John 15:12-15 (NLT2)

*Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

*Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge—
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,
Thou wilt find a solace there.¹⁶*

Jesus wants to be your friend, to call you His friend, but He won't until you want to be His friend, by loving as He loved, obeying His commands, and submitting to Him. He will never force Himself upon you; you must want Him.

At the beginning of the school year during recess, a boy was on the playground looking for some of his friends. He couldn't find them. Then two boys came up to him and asked, "Do you need a friend? We want to be your friends?" He said, "No." Was he mean? No, he just didn't know them. Through time, they became friends. In much the same way Jesus comes to us and says, "I want to be your friend." What will our response be? If we get to know Jesus, we will find Him to be the best friend we can ever have. What is your answer to His offer of friendship?

¹⁶ Joseph M. Scriven. "What a Friend we have in Jesus". UM Hymnal #526