



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 28, 2013

Easter 5

Sermon Text: [John 13:31-35](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 20:12-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 145](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 13:31-35](#)

What's New?

As I have loved you
So you must love one another

In Christ, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

What's new? It's a common greeting. In fact, this week I was visiting one of our shut-ins and sat down and they said to me, "Not much new in my life this last month. What's new at church and the congregation?" We talked a little bit and then they went on to list a bunch of stuff that I thought was new in their life from the month before, but so be it. That's kind of how we talk, right? What's new? We kind of don't even pay attention to that phrase anymore.

But I think when Jesus starting talking about what was new on Maundy Thursday, the disciples paid attention and sat up straight and their heads had to be spinning. I have to believe they didn't quite get it. Jesus said to them, "A new command I give you: Love one another." What in the world did he mean? A new command?

Some of these guys had heard Jesus explain to the teacher of the Law who had come to him and said, "What is the greatest command in the Law?" Jesus had said, "The greatest command is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." That's pretty much love one another, right? So what is new with this new command? The whole Law that was given at Mount Sinai is summed up with the word love. Love God. Love your neighbor. What in the world is Jesus talking about...love one another?

I don't think they probably got it until much later, probably when the Spirit was poured out on them at Pentecost and they began to tell everyone who Jesus is and what he had done. They really got it then. This new command was new because Jesus says, "As I have loved you." When he said those words, within 24 hours they were going to see the full extent of his love. Now the reason to love one another would be different than just the Law given at Mount Sinai. The reason for keeping that was because God had said "If you don't keep these commands, if you break this covenant, this two-sided agreement, then I'm not going to do all the things, all the blessings I have promised you in this covenant." If you want to read them, they are there in [Leviticus](#). "Instead, I am going to give you all the curses that are in this covenant." They are there in [Leviticus](#) if you want to read them.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, exactly how long did it take them to break the covenant? What was the First Command? You shall have no other gods. Don't make any graven images. When Moses was slow in coming down, what did they do? They built a golden calf. They didn't keep the covenant. They broke the covenant. When it's "have to," we break it all the time. So when our God says, "Hey, here's something new. As I have loved you, so you must love one another," he's telling us this is a whole new world for us as Christians. It's not "have to," it's "get to." It's "want to." It's how we thank the Lord who loved us first. We live in response to love. We don't live out of fear. He says this is a pretty important thing, to love one another. So that's what we want to think about, this new command to love one another, and exactly what it means.

The first sentence that I read to you said "When he was gone." The "he" there refers to Judas. Jesus had said to him, "What you are about to do, go and do quickly." The disciples didn't know what he was talking about. They didn't know the full extent of Jesus' love yet. They didn't know what Jesus was reaching out to Judas and talking to him about. They didn't understand when Judas greeted Jesus later that night and Jesus said, "Friend, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss" that Jesus was trying to call him to repentance. Their heads had to be spinning. They didn't get it all. The fulness of Jesus' love was that he knows what is about to happen. He knows that one of his own is about to stab him in the back for those little pieces of silver. It's sad. Yet Jesus doesn't get angry and say, "If that's how you guys are going to treat me, I'm going back to heaven. To hell with all of you." It would have been fair if he would have, right? Can anyone say that it would have been unfair? We would have been getting exactly what we deserve. But Jesus continues on the path that leads to the cross, that leads to "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That leads to the agony of hell itself compressed into that time that he was on the cross and that all sins of all time, your sins, my sins, everyone's sins, paid for. He lived in our place. Then he died in our place. This is the full extent of his love. He put our interests ahead of his own.

"As I have loved you." Think about what that means. He's in the glory of heaven. He is the guy who said, "Let there be light," and there was light. He had left heaven. He came to earth. He reached out to people time and time again only to have people reject him, only to have his own turn on him, only to have those who said "Hosanna" change their shouts to "Crucify." Time and time again. He said it on the way to the cross, right? "I've longed to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you're not willing." Yet he still loves. He still loves perfectly. He still carries the sins of those that condemned him, those who rejected him, to the cross, just as certainly as he carried your sins and my sins. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

This is a love unlike any love that can be motivated by the Law. This is a love that does. It acts. It's not an emotion. In our society, we have turned love primarily into an emotion. For God, love has always primarily been an action. He loves by putting our interest ahead of his own. He loves by forgiving. He loves by living in our place. He loves by dying in our place. He loves by sending the Spirit to us in Word and Sacrament. He loves by forgiving the sins we continue to commit day after day. His

love is real and tangible. It's not just a warm mushy. "As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

Remember how Peter, when he was reinstated after Jesus had risen from the dead, was hurt because three times Jesus had said, "Peter, do you love me?" God repeats things for emphasis. Did you notice that when we read this section of God's Word? "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Do you think he's trying to tell us to love one another here? "As I have loved you, you must love one another." Think of what that means?

Where he was going, the disciples couldn't go and we couldn't go. We can't take other people's sins away. It's already been done by Jesus. So we don't go there to that place like that. The Father was glorified in the Son because the Son carried this out. But we glorify the Father and we glorify the Son as we do what he says here. As we love one another. As people look at us and see that we love one another, it reveals to them that we are his disciples. When they see us loving like no one else in the world loves, they want to know why. Then we get to share Christ with them. That's God's plan. It's a pretty simple and straightforward plan. What in the world could mess it up? Besides us?

There's just one scary little word in that last sentence there, isn't there? It's two letters. An I and an f. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, **if**" (here comes a condition again), "**if** you love one another." Which means that you and I have the ability to not meet that condition, to not love as God loved us. You know what? You and I don't do it that well, do we?

Did you do that like I asked you to as we read [1 Corinthians 13](#)? Did you put your name in there? (Replace your name for the word "love.") Randy is patient. Randy is kind. Randy keeps no record of wrongs. Not quite. Did you do that and apply it to yourself as you interact with your fellow believers? That's what that passage is talking about.

Take that same paragraph and put Christ in there or Jesus in there. Jesus is patient. Jesus is kind. Jesus keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus is not self seeking. Then you can see what God is asking of us, right? That's what he's asking us to do, and we don't do it. We don't even love Jesus as we love ourselves at times, right? How in the world are we going to love each other as Jesus loved us?

Think about it for yourself. What gets in your way? "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." Jesus loved us by putting our interests ahead of his own. Do we find it easy to put others' interests ahead of our own, or are we real good at putting our interests ahead of our interests? We do it all the time, don't we? We do it all the time. Every single one of us. All of us do it. We all tend to think we are the center of the universe and everyone else should rotate around us. We do it even when we are dealing with God stuff, don't we?

As we talk about a second service in our congregation, I've heard people say, "I don't want to do it because I like how it feels when the church is full. I like a full church. I don't like a half-full church." I'll agree with you. I like a full church too. That's fine. I understand what you're saying, but there's an awful lot of I's in that statement, isn't there? It's about what I like and what I prefer and not about what might serve others best.

An example would be that one of the things in these priority of ministry meetings we've been having, I sat in about 10-11 of them now, other men on a committee did others, one of the things I've heard, and I think the other men have heard, the ones I've talked to, is that we need to do something for our 20-something members. We need to do something more for our 20-something members because that's when a lot of people tend to stray. We need to do something for our 20-something members. You know what? If we want all people to know that we are Jesus' disciples and that we love Jesus more than anything else in the world, I would suggest to you that one of the best ways we could do it is to move all of our worship services to Thursday at 2:17 a.m., and when the people are driving home from the bar and they drive by and see this lit up, they'll know those people love Jesus, right? There isn't anybody that is going to want to do that, is there?

But for our 20-something members, would it be easier for them to come to a later service than an earlier service? Is it easier to get a family of small children ready? I'm happy when I see the little kids come in with their pants on the right way and not inside out or backwards because I know how some of you are struggling to get here. But when we talk about that, I heard one person say, "For my 20-something's, it would be easier to have a later service. They might be more inclined to get here." One of the responses I've heard at various times is, "If they can go out Saturday night, they should know that they have to get up and be here at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning." Okay, fine, but isn't love one another saying let's do what we can to help one another the best we can and put your interest ahead of my own? Yeah, I like the feeling of a full church. You bet. But if a less full church and two services means that more of those people are going to hear about how their Savior loves them and is with them as they go through a difficult time of life, wouldn't that be a good thing?

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another." That means that sometimes we do things that aren't our first choice, but because we feel it might show love to another person and help another person be closer to Christ, we do it. It isn't always easy. It isn't always something that we want to do. But the more we see how often we have failed Jesus in this area, the more we see how we keep a record of wrongs, the more we see how we are self-centered and then we hear our Savior say to us, "Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven." When we hear him say, "This is my body. This is my blood, poured out for you. You are forgiven." As we see how patient he is with us and how willing he is to forgive us for our self-centeredness day after day after day, then the Spirit starts filling us and we rejoice in that forgiveness and then it flows over into our life and we want to love others. It takes work. Just like a marriage takes work, loving your fellow believers takes work. But it's something we want to do. We want to forgive

and love as God has forgiven and loves us. It's something we strive to do. We want to love one another, pray for one another, rejoice with one another, cry with one another, because we love one another, because our Savior loved us first.

God forgive us for the times we don't. God forgive us for the times we are suspicious. God forgive us for the times we attack one another. And that's just it. He does. That's why we want to do as he did and love one another. Amen.