

February 26th, 2017

A NEW COMMANDMENT I GIVE TO YOU

John 13:31-38

We're back in the gospel of John this morning. And we need to set the stage for what we are going to see. Jesus' public ministry is finished. In just a few hours He will be in Gethsemane when He will be arrested, and subsequently tried and then crucified. Jesus just washed His disciples feet, foreshadowing His cleansing them with the blood of the cross. And Satan has entered Judas the betrayer leading him out into the darkness. And now Jesus is left alone with the eleven.

Beginning here, Jesus gives His farewell discourse and it continues through the end of chapter sixteen. In it we see Jesus instructing them, giving them promises, warnings, and commandments.¹ But here Jesus begins by giving the disciples *the* distinguishing mark of a true disciple: love.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Like Peter, our temptation will be to completely gloss over this clear command Jesus gives in order to get on with the secret stuff. “Jesus give us the deep stuff. We already know this basic stuff.” In the end, it's clear that Peter didn't know the basic stuff.

What did Peter miss? He missed three things. 1) **Jesus' clue that this was a new commandment.** “A new commandment I give to you.” There is something in this command to love, that, like the gospel, was a “mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints”² (Col. 1:26). 2) **The**

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 86

² “It is this that makes it *a new commandment*—that this rule and reason of love (as I have loved you) is perfectly new, and such has been hidden from ages and generations.” ² Matthew Henry's Commentary for the Kindle, OSNOVA's Kindle Edition, location 248362

“newness” was this: “love one another: *just as* I have loved you.” The world does not know this kind of love. Jesus loves His people though we have given Him *every reason* to punish us forever in hell. He has **united** Himself to us such that His destiny is our destiny—inseparably bound forever. He calls us to love *like that*. Though we give each other every reason to give up on each other, become bitter or angry or unforgiving, we love in spite of it all, because that is how He loves us.³ **3) Loving like this puts Jesus on display for all the world to see.** v.35 “By this all people will know that you are *my disciples*, if you have love for one another.” Jesus wants us to love like this so that He is on display. And this gets to the very essence of what love is. Loving someone else is not placing them at the center of your relational universe. It’s doing whatever it takes to keep Jesus at the center of every relational universe. Loving others is not, *emphatically not*, elevating their value and their well being to the highest point. Loving others *means*, as John Piper has said, “doing whatever you need to do to help people see and savor the glory of God in Christ forever and ever.”⁴

Oh if we could just get this, it would revolutionize our lives! To love one another *in spite of how* they treat you. To love one another, because you want Jesus to be displayed. This kind of love will make you the freest, most forgiving, most fearless person on the planet.

The Big Idea...

To love one another means to do whatever it takes to help others taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ

☆ Jesus Loving Us *Is* the Displaying of His Glory

☆ Our Loving Others *Is* the Displaying of His Glory

³ As Jesus later prays for us that we “my become perfectly **one**” (John 17:23) even as Jesus and the Father are one.”

⁴ John Piper, *God is the Gospel: Meditations on God’s Love as the Gift of Himself*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2005), pg. 153

I. Jesus Loving Us *Is* the Displaying of His Glory

Fatal circumstances

(v.31) “When he had gone out...” So imagine the scene. It’s nighttime. Judas, whom Satan entered, just left. Where did he go? To the chief priests. He made a deal, and now he is going to put into motion the events that will lead to the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus. How does Jesus respond? He’s fully aware of what Judas is doing. Jesus is the one who sent him out (v.27). Now what in the world does Jesus teach, in light of these fatal circumstances?

Now is the Son of Man **glorified** crucified?

He turns to his disciples and says “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Jesus is speaking about Himself. The Son of Man means that Jesus was fully God⁵ (**John 1:1**) and fully man (**John 1:14**) in one person. And Jesus says that *now*, meaning in light of Judas’ treachery, *now* is the Son of Man glorified. What does that mean? How will Jesus be glorified? Through His crucifixion.

There are textual clues for this. Look at v.32 “If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him *at once*.” The Father glorified the Son *at once*, meaning at Jesus’ imminent death and resurrection. There is a glory coming at the end of this age when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). But the glory that Jesus is speaking of now is the glory of crucifixion.

Dear congregation, the defining moment of Jesus’ glory on earth was not his miracles—it was not those acts of raising people from the dead, acts that the world has never seen. No. “the Son of Man came...to give his life as a ransom for many” (**Mark 10:45**) That’s why Jesus came—to die. Which means **the defining moment of Jesus’ glory on earth was His shameful death on the cross.** That sentence should shock you—that Jesus was most exalted and

⁵ Daniel 7:13-14

honored and magnified (glorified) when He was nailed to a cross of wood. How does the shameful cross bring glory? It was the worst punishment in the Roman world. And, it was a sign of being accursed by God. **Galatians 3:13** says “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”

So how can Jesus say that He is *glorified* by being crucified? And why didn't Jesus just say this in v.31? Why didn't He just say “Now is the Son of Man *crucified*?”⁶ **Because Jesus wants us to connect His being crucified with His being glorified.** The cross is the greatest theater that ever has or ever will be conceived. It displays both the infinite hatred of God towards sin, and the infinite love of God towards sinners. Condemnation and salvation in one act. Jesus became the greatest sinner by imputation—meaning God placed on Him the iniquity of all His people; and those who believe have been given the pure white righteous robes of Christ. **The cross is the supreme display of the glory of God.** Calvin says here:

“In all the creatures...both high and low, the glory of God shines, but nowhere has it shone more brightly than in the cross, in which there has been an astonishing change of things, the condemnation of all men has been manifested, sin has been blotted out, salvation has been restored to men; and, in short, the whole world has been renewed, and everything restored to good order.”⁷

It is through the cross of Jesus Christ that we most clearly see the glory of God.

Jesus Loving Us *is* the Displaying of His Glory

And that is why we can say that Jesus loving us *is* the displaying of His glory. Can you see it? Let's translate v.31 from the third person to the first person to make it more clear. Jesus is saying “Now I'm going to be magnified. And My Father will be magnified also. When He punishes Me on that cross for sinners, He will be shown to be holy and righteous because He is unwilling to

⁶ Matthew Henry's Commentary for the Kindle, OSNOVA's Kindle Edition, location 248278

⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVIII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg.73

pass over the wickedness of even one sin; *and* He will be shown to be merciful and kind and forgiving, because He is unwilling that all should perish. You will know the love of God when you see My glory in full display.” That is how Jesus begins His farewell discourse. By declaring that the way He loves us is by fully displaying His glory on the shameful cross.

‘Where I am going you cannot come’

Let’s look to see what Jesus says next. v.33 “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews,⁸ so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ What’s happening here? Judas is selling Jesus out right now. And Jesus is preparing his loved ones for that. He tenderly calls them “little children” and tells them ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’

Up to this point, it was easy to tell who the disciples of Christ were. They were the ones that followed Jesus. For three years, He led and they followed. If He went to Galilee, they went. If it was dinner at Martha and Mary’s, they were likewise guests. If to Jerusalem, they followed. That’s how you knew who Jesus’ disciples were, they followed Him. But now that Jesus is leaving, Jesus is providing a new evidence of their discipleship: their love for one another.

II. Our Loving Others *Is* the Displaying of His Glory

Love One Another: Just As I Have Loved You

Jesus begins with the first command, the distinguishing mark of being a Christian, v.34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

⁸ When he says “You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come,’ He doesn’t mean this in the exact same way that He said it to the Jews. Jesus said this to the Jews *because* they didn’t believe upon Him. He gave them grave warnings to turn away from their unbelief, for if they did not, they would die in their sin (**cf. John 7:34; 8:24**).

The first thing we need to address, is how is this a *new* commandment? Certainly the commandment to love others, even our enemies is not new. **Leviticus 19:18** says "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself." But Jesus didn't call it "new" for no reason. It's *new* because Jesus adds the qualifier: "just as I have loved you." And so it begs the question: how *does* Jesus love us? How *does* Jesus love the church? I see three answers to that. Jesus loves us with **1) A Divine Love; 2) A Contrary Love; 3) A Binding Love**

Love One Another With A Divine Love

There is a human way to love one another that can even do grand things. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says this in his book *Life Together* "human love...is what Paul is speaking of when he says "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned"—in other words, though I combine the utmost deeds of love with the utmost devotion— "but have not love [that is, the love of Christ] I gain nothing." (**1 Corinthians 13:3**) Human love is directed to the other person for his own sake, [but] spiritual love loves him for Christ's sake...Human love makes *itself* an end in itself...an idol which it worships...[But] Spiritual love... comes from Jesus Christ, it serves him alone...Jesus Christ stands between the lover and the others He loves."⁹ Why does Jesus love us *ultimately*? For His own sake—*because* of who He is. **Ephesians 1:5-6** "In **love** he predestined us for **adoption...to the praise of his glorious grace.**"¹⁰ Ultimately Jesus loves us for God's sake. And this is the surest most secure foundation of love. And that is how we are called to love one another. Not *ultimately* for each other's sake. That foundation is shifting sand. We are to love each other because Jesus Christ stands between us.

⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, Trans. John W. Doberstein, (New York, NY.: HarperOne, 1954), pg. 36-37

¹⁰ Jesus loves us *because* the Father gave us to Him (John 17:9). Jesus loves us to the end so that we might behold His glory (John 17:24).

Love One Another With A Contrary Love

Jesus loves the church with a contrary love not a corresponding love. Meaning Jesus' love for us does not depend upon us meeting conditions. In fact Jesus loves us especially when we give Him reasons *not to*. Dear congregation, there is still much remaining corruption in even the greatest of saints. Paul said O "Wretched man that I am!" (**Romans 7:24**) Dear congregation, this truth is the most surprising truth of the Christian life for me. I daily know the pride that I have in wanting to be first. I know the flattery that I can offer to people in order for them to like me. Or the impatience with them when they don't. I know the anger I feel when I'm not at the center. And when God corrects me again, and again, and again, I'm shocked. His love for me does not correspond with how I perform. He loves me contrary to how I perform.

This is what Jesus expects from us. Our love for one another is not to be based on the other person's love. Jesus said "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (**Matthew 5:46**) No our love is to be a *contrary* love. Look at v.34 again. "...love one another: just as I have loved you," Meaning just as I have loved you contrary to your performance, do the same. Jesus presupposes that the people we are called to love will give us reasons not to love them.

John Newton wrote to his friend Rev. Whitford in 1757. Whitford used to be connected to the Methodists, and then he became a minister of an independent church. This caused some difficulty with his relationships in the church. Newton wrote saying "Our Lord has not only taught us to expect persecution from the world...but we must look to be in some respects slighted, censured, and misunderstood, even by our Christian brethren, and that, perhaps, in cases where we are really striving to promote the glory of God and the good of souls...Therefore we are required, not only to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, but likewise to bear one another's burdens: which plainly [teaches]

there will be something to [have to bear with].”¹¹ When we love one another like this, we are loving as Jesus loved us.

Love One Another With A Binding Love

So far, the love we have described, we owe to all men, including our enemies (**Matthew 5:44**). But the love that we are to have for the saints is a special love, just like the love that Jesus has for the church is a special love. When Jesus commands us to love one another: just as I have loved you,” He’s telling us to love one another in a manner that **unites us to each other just as He has united us to Himself**.¹² Dear congregation, this unity will be fully realized in heaven. Jonathan Edwards says “In heaven all shall have property and ownership in each other...Christ and the saints will have given themselves to each other...In heaven not only will all be related to one another, but they shall be each other’s, and belong to each other.”¹³

This is how Jesus wants us to think now. This was David and Jonathan’s love “The soul of Jonathan was *knit* to the soul of David, and Jonathan *loved him as his own soul*” (**1 Samuel 18:1**) Likewise this was the love of the early church “Now the full number of those who believed were of *one heart and soul*,” (**Acts 4:32**)¹⁴

Beloved, this is how Christ loves us. We have become His objects of delight. “The LORD your God is in your midst...he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” (**Zephaniah 3:17**). This is how He wants us to love each other—as mutual

¹¹ John Newton, *Letters Of John Newton*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2015), pg. 39

¹² 1 John 5:1 “Everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.”

¹³ Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, (USA,,: Great Plains Press, 2012), pg. 207

¹⁴ It is on the basis of this union, that God commands us to remember the persecuted church “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” (Hebrews 13:3)

objects of delight and pleasure.¹⁵ Just as we are His delight, He wants to delight in each other.

By this all people will know

Now Jesus gives us a reason for this new commandment. Look at v.35 “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Consider for a moment if Jesus didn’t speak these words. The command is to love in v.34 is still intact. He didn’t have to say v. 35. What is the point of the world knowing that we love each other? Who cares?

The church Father Tertullian helps answer that question. He wrote approximately a century after the Apostle John. In his day, Christians were often under severe persecution by the state. And the pagans took notice when Christians were willing and ready to die for one another. So much so that they attached this brand to them: “See how they love one another!”¹⁶ When the world sees true Christian love, they don’t know what to do with it. That’s the point of v.35: True Christian love “...proclaims the true God before a watching world.”¹⁷ Jesus want us to love another so that He is on display. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples.”

Peter’s response and ours

How do the disciples hear this? If Peter is their representative, they they totally missed it. Look at the first thing that Peter says in v.36 “Lord, where are you going?” Does this ever happen to you? You’re telling someone something really important, and then when it’s their turn to speak, they completely change the subject. That’s what Peter was did. He completely glossed over what Jesus said thinking that he had this love thing nailed down. “Yea, yea Jesus. That’s

¹⁵ Colossians 2:2 says that our hearts are to be “...knit together in love.” Colossians 3:14 “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

¹⁶ <http://www.logoslibrary.org/tertullian/apology/39.html>

¹⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), pg. 485

the basic stuff. Give me the deeper stuff.” **And we do the same thing.** **Dear congregation, loving one another, *the basic stuff*, is the thing that we *most lack*.** Not because we are especially worse than others. But because loving others is the most difficult thing to do in the Christian life. Most of the regular difficulties that this body faces wouldn’t even be an issue if we obeyed Jesus’ command here. Why does party spirit exist among us? Why is there gossip? Why are there suspicious thoughts about one another? Why is there jealousy and jockeying for position? Why is there bitterness and long-standing unresolved conflicts? Why do people avoid each other, or dread coming to church? Where ever those things exist, love does not, because Scripture says that “love...binds everything together in perfect harmony” (**Colossians 3:14**) Perhaps we are not advanced as we think.

Should that surprise us? Peter thought he was well advanced in the deeper things of God. He says in v. 37 “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” How does Jesus respond? “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.” Peter had not learned how weak he still was. He thought he was strong. He thought he more advanced than others. He thought he had the basic stuff down. May that not be true about us.

Application

Our Doctrine: Loving one another means doing whatever it takes to help others taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ

There may be Christians who struggle with this definition of love, because the Bible gives us very clear definition of love in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7:**

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or

resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

That definition that Paul gives doesn't sound like the definition I gave: *To love one another means to do whatever it takes to help others taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ.* So how do we reconcile this? Let's consider what is being said.

Love is patient. When someone is truly patient with you, for the good of your own soul, whose patience are you truly tasting? "The LORD is merciful and gracious, *slow to anger* and abounding in steadfast love" (**Psalm 103:8**)

Love is kind. When someone shows you kindness, not for their own gain, but selflessly, whose kindness are you truly tasting? "But when the goodness and loving *kindness* of God our Savior appeared, he saved us" (**Titus 3:5**)

Love does not envy or boast, it is not arrogant or rude. When you are walking in humility, you are displaying the humble heart of Christ who "... *emptied himself*, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." (**Phil. 2:7**)

Everything that Paul says about love in 1 Corinthians 13 is the way that Jesus loves. Therefore when we love others like this, we are helping them taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ. And there are more difficult qualities in here as well.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing. Love confronts sin. I have often felt most loved, when a brother has come into my office and helped me see where I have it wrong. "God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance" (**Romans 2:4**)

Love endures all things. Love can endure the failures and weaknesses, and immaturities, of others, because that's what Christ has done for us. "Consider

him who *endured* from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not go weary or faint-hearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” (Hebrews 12:3-4)

That’s our **doctrine**: Loving one another means doing whatever it takes to help others taste and see the glory of Jesus Christ. Therefore our duty is to...

Our Duty: Love one another

Dear congregation, **love is the litmus test of whether or not we are Christians.** It does not matter how much theology we know. If our theology doesn’t lead us to love each other, we are no better off than the devils. If our theology doesn’t lead us to love, John, the Apostle who sat at the dinner table with Jesus when He spoke these words, says that we are not Christian.

1 John 3:10 “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, *nor is the one who does not love his brother.*”

1 John 4:20 “If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for *he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.*”

1 John 3:14 “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. *Whoever does not love abides in death.*”

1 John 3:17 “But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, *how does God's love abide in him?*”

1 John 4:8 “Anyone who *does not love does not know God*, because God is love.”

Jonathan Edwards argues that love is “is the very life and [soul] of a true faith.”¹⁸ He says that because of **James 2:26**. “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” What is the life a body? The spirit. The spirit *is* the working nature in man.¹⁹ Without the spirit, the body is dead. Likewise, love is the working nature of love. **Galatians 5:6** which says “...*faith* [works] *through love*,” Without love, our faith is dead. That’s Paul’s point in the opening verses in 1 Corinthians 13. We can be endowed with the gift of tongues and knowledge and faith; and we can have the most charitable hearts, sacrificing our bodies and and our wealth for others. But if we lack love, then it all counts for not.

That’s our **duty**: to love one another. Our **delight** is...

Our Delight: Jesus’ words to Peter: “You will follow afterward”

The failure of Peter in this passage was epic. But consider the gospel that Christ offers. Jesus told him “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, **but you will follow afterward.**” Jesus saw through every failure that Peter would have. He saw through His denial and abandonment at his trial. He saw through his racism towards Gentiles in the book of Acts. He saw through his perversion of the gospel in the book of Galatians. And yet what does Jesus tell him? “You will follow me afterward.” “[Peter] I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” (**Luke 22:32**)

Jesus doesn’t hang our everlasting life on the paper thin thread of how well we love each other. Because we are going to do this badly.

The gospel is not good news if it merely provides a way into the kingdom of God. If now we have to be perfected by our good morals, and right living,

¹⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, (USA,: Great Plains Press, 2012), pg. 15

¹⁹ *ibid*

and smiling faces in order to keep God loving us, we are in desperate straits.²⁰ **No the gospel is also the good news of how we stay in the kingdom of God.** Some of the worst sins that we will commit will happen after we become Christians. Religious sins, or pharisaical sins are condemned more frequently in the gospels than than any other sins. And that's how we sin. Just like Peter.

And so what Jesus Peter, He tells all who have truly trust Him. "You will follow me afterward...I went to the cross for you. You were not able to follow me. This is not your work. You will never be able to atone for your own sin. This is why I came. Because you have failed, and you will continue to fail. But my blood and my righteousness is enough. It will cover all your failings, and in the end, you will follow me to glory."²¹

Closing Prayer to Sermon

Benediction:

²⁰ Galatians 3:3

²¹ "Nothing, not their coming defection and denial nor even their own future deaths, would be able to separate them from the love of their Lord." John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL,; Moody Publishers, 2008), pg. 92

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14)