**A NEW COMMANDMENT:**

**BY THIS ALL WILL KNOW**

34 “***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another***.” - John 13:34-35

Jesus had just finished washing the disciples’ feet (13:1-17). His hands were still wet and His knees were still dirty from kneeling. Jesus had just identified to John, at the request of Peter, who would have the audacity to betray Him (13:18-30). When Judas makes his surprising exit Jesus then makes this amazing statement:

“*So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately*.” (13:31-32)

In other words, everything God has planned since the foundation of the world to redeem man and exalt Christ is now set in irrevocable motion. There is no turning back. At the cross, followed three days later at the tomb, God will be glorified through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The greatest act in all human history is about to be played out. The clock is now ticking.

With that said Jesus stuns them with this statement that at first confuses them (and us), but later enlightens them (and us). God had always taught His people to love others. Moses had written: “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18). Man had always been taught to love God, for Moses wrote:

“*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart*.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

So how is Jesus commandment to love one another considered *new*? And how is loving one another the critical identifying mark of discipleship? It’s found in His condition: “*as I have loved you*.” That makes us ask, how did Jesus love us different from all other human love? In this same upper room Jesus later preached,

“*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another* ***as I have loved you****. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends*.” (15:9-13)

While a husband would lay down his life for his wife, as a parent would lay down their life for a child, as a friend might lay down her life for a friend, and as a soldier would lay down his life for a comrade or his country, what Jesus did was far greater than any of these acts of sacrifice. What made Jesus commandment “new” was His expansion of the word love. Read Matthew 5:43-48 to better grasp what Jesus is saying.

While God had taught Israel to “*love your neighbor*” they had never considered also “*love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*.” To love those who love you is but imitating the world. To greet your brethren only is but imitating even religious folks. But perfect love is God’s love, and that was only on full display at the cross. “*As I have loved you*” was seen as He washed their feet, as He forgave their denials and cowardice in the Garden and in Pilate’s court, and as He wore a crown of thorns and died saving a thief and asking God’s forgiveness to those who murdered Him.

**Application**

As the world is recoiling inward, constricting their lives in fear, looking to protect themselves by hoarding food, hygiene items and other forms of selfish behaviors, disciples of Christ are showing the world a different *modus operandi*. We are looking outward for ways to show the world something radically different. It’s not about me (or even my family), it’s about others. Jesus’ mindset in the upper room, and upon Calvary’s cross, was both upward (toward God), and outward (toward man). And not just those of His own inner circle, or even His own race, but toward all men, even those who were now hating and hanging Him.

Yes, “*by this all will know*” we are disciples when we love like Jesus Christ. When we get outside of ourselves and “show-and-tell” something radically different than how the world is behaving. In life, or even in death, let us put on full display the love of Jesus to one another, and to our neighbors, and to the lost in sin. If we love unconditionally “*all will know*” we are not of this world, but of Him who died for us.

So Northwest family, let us show the world something different. Go low in washing feet – in loving the oldest and weakest – in reaching out to the lonely and scared – in reaching across racial or ethnic barriers – in sharing when others are hoarding. This is our moment in history. This is our time to love so that “*by this all will know*” our Lord.

I love you.

Rick