

GOSPEL: John 13:31-35 *The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 13th chapter.*

Glory to you, O Lord.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon: Please have a seat. Grace and peace to you from God the Father, Christ Jesus the Son, and from the Holy Spirit.

Gifts are a way for people to show their love. Couples exchange gifts on anniversaries. Children throw parties with their friends and get a whole stack of presents. When planning weddings, gift guards are needed, as newlyweds are bestowed with so many things that help start their relationship off with all the necessities. Around different holidays there are baskets or socks of goodies - such as Easter and Christmas, but even May Day too.

Gifts are so important to many of us actually. In a study on love built through years of marriage counseling, Dr. Gary Chapman came up with 5 love languages. As in ways that people feel their love - languages of love. One of these languages focused on gifts. So as these life events come along, births, birthdays, marriages, anniversaries, or those holidays too, the gifts given are usually valued and treasured.

Like my porcelain doll from my grandparents. I received it when I was probably 8 or 9 years old, later naming it Brownie because of her brown chair and dress. Or like my ceramic horse from my brother. This alb I wear today. The “Pauly” crochet piece that Joel and I received for our wedding that is now displayed on our stair well, the first thing you see entering our house. These are all valued and treasured gifts. And to let you in on another secret, my love language isn’t even the one of receiving gifts.

On the other hand, where does the gift buying end? How do we judge when we have given enough gifts that the other person can feel the love they need to feel? How often should we give gifts? And when considering the price of gifts - how much is enough? Am I a cheap Aunt for getting my nieces and nephews \$20 gifts? Is that enough? Am I loving them enough? albeit there isn’t always correlation between love and gifts.

This text, in my bible and based off of verse 34, was titled, - The New Commandment. Jesus commands us to love one another. Yet, love is hard to figure out. Especially with this text. We are backtracking from texts that take place after the resurrection to texts that are before even the crucifixion. If you attended the Maundy Thursday worship, this was the text.

In this text we are back to the moments after Judas walked from the room with his heart intent on betraying Jesus. Judas goes out and Jesus says that now He has been glorified, and God in him. Judas’ betrayal that leads to Jesus’ death glorifies Jesus! Glorifies God.

Glory feels foreign in this text. Glory is not the ecstatic high after a win. Glory is not rank or position. Glory is not our big accomplishment. Glory rather is in a king, a savior, being

betrayed. Glory is a betrayal that leads to the death of Jesus. As God has planned and ordained from the beginning of time. In that death is glory. This concept is completely foreign and doesn't seem right.

Then Jesus says, "Little children, I am with you only a little longer." He foretold them that he would die and would not be in their midst for three days. Saying here in this text, "Where I am going, you cannot come." As if saying, I am going someplace for three days, and you are unable to follow.

And that is when our new command comes in, yet all along it has been our command. Now it is summing up the later 7 commands from the tablets of stone given in Exodus 20. When we love one another we are not breaking those commands. Love one another.

Pause, large scale now, the reality of the task is daunting. This command is telling us to do that for every person on our street, in this city, our state, the world. But how can we ever? The task is too large! And...there are people who do not make it easy.

We may feel able to make loaves of banana bread for the people on our street, or pass out candy to the neighborhood kids on halloween, but where is the love for the other neighbors who didn't receive such things?

And Jesus takes it further. Love as I have. What is his love? Jesus' love was a cross burdened walk to Golgotha. Where he then died on the cross. Jesus' love was bearing the sin of the world into his death.

The truth is that we cannot love as Jesus loves. We cannot take others' sins from them. No this only happens when we speak of Christ to them. And even still it is not our speaking, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit using the words we speak. The Spirit works forgiveness of sins.

May the Holy Spirit open your ears to receive what I say next. It is a gift, your gift. The truest and most wonderful gift for you. And though we can never quite be assured of how well we love, we can know this gift.

These things of this scripture have come to pass. Judas betrays Jesus. Jesus made this walk to Golgotha, he hung on the cross and died. He was placed in a tomb and in three days' time, that tomb was found empty. Jesus arose from the dead! O what glory, unlike what we know!

In this death, in this rising, Jesus who took your sins with him to the cross has completely freed you. The sins you once had, are no longer yours. You have forgiveness in their place. You are forgiven in Jesus' name.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.