



John 13 Selections
 Maundy Thursday Service
 An Example of Love

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 Maundy Thursday

The Thursday before Easter is called Maundy Thursday. “Maundy” is the Latin word for “command” – we get our word “mandate” from it. We ascribe it to this day because of Jesus’ statement to the disciples in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another, as I have loved you.”

You may recall this last Sunday I said that our sermon series in Galatians had come to a close. Well, April Fools! It’s continuing tonight. Well, it sort of is. As we’ve heard in Galatians, Paul writes, “Love your neighbor as yourselves” which probably many of us know is exactly what Jesus himself said when he was asked about the greatest commandment. **First, Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” Then he says, “And another is like it: Love your neighbor as yourselves.” Those are the two great commandments.**

So, Paul quotes Jesus in Galatians 5, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” He also writes in Galatians 5, “Serve one another humbly in love” which as I mentioned this past Sunday, is really saying the same thing. He’s being redundant. And it’s not that different than Jesus serving the disciples by washing their feet, and then telling them to love. There’s redundancy there, too. In Galatians, these phrases give further explanation to what Paul writes just before them: “Let your faith express itself in love.”

So, tonight we kind of extend our sermon series on Galatians, not by looking at Galatians directly, but acknowledging that these verses in Galatians are built on Jesus’ own teaching and the example he gave by his own life, including at the Last Supper. And that’s what we’re looking at tonight, including this command that Jesus gives, to love one another, that gives Maundy Thursday its name.

As you are probably aware: **Jesus served others in humility, which he says himself is an example of how we are to love others.** For example, Jesus served the disciples by washing their feet. We saw that in some of the verses we read tonight. That might be how we end up showing God’s love to

someone. You might care for a child or an elderly parent where you wash their feet, or their hair, or even more. You might find yourself on a mission trip washing peoples' feet. But we need not get too hung up on the foot washing itself. The point Jesus is making is to love and serve our neighbor, and He's giving us an example here of how we do that. It's an example that we can identify with and repeat – more so than his death on the cross, which is another act of love and service. That's a one-time sacrificial act of love.

Then in verse 34, after finishing washing each of the disciples' feet, and after sharing in the Passover meal with the 12 disciples, he gives this “new” commandment to love one another as Jesus has loved them, so that the world would know that they are Jesus' Disciples.

There are a couple observations I want to highlight for us here in regards to this. **First, we see here that Jesus loves us no matter who we are.** You know, there's an interesting connection between Jesus, Judas, and Peter...and us. Judas is at the table and presumably has his feet washed along with all the other disciples, even though Jesus knows that Judas will betray him into the hands of the authorities. He got up and left immediately after the meal. Judas looks all good on the outside, but inside he's deceitful.

Peter, on the other hand, has already previously shown his discipleship as one where he can speak and even act before thinking, as you probably know. We even see that here in verse 37 when he professes following Jesus wherever he may go and even a willingness to lay down his life for Jesus. And yet later, as Jesus says here that he will do, he will deny he even knows Jesus.

So they've both got issues. And really, they're not the only two. There's also Tomas who later doubts the news of the resurrection until he can see and touch Jesus himself. And there's James and John who wanted Jesus to appoint them to sit at his right and left hands when he comes into his kingdom; and still another time all the disciples are arguing about which of them is the greatest.

They've all got imperfections in following Jesus. And yet, Jesus loves them. When he tells them to love as he does, this is what he means. Love no

matter what. He humbly washes their feet and serves each of them the Passover meal that he redefines into what you and I know as Communion. The fact that he loves them and serves them here is significant and illustrates for us the unconditional nature of Jesus' love. He doesn't *only* love those who perfectly love him back. He doesn't love *only* those who have everything together, whose discipleship is perfect, and so forth.

Jesus' love is way more persistent than that. **Jesus is not deterred by Judas or Peter, or any of the others...and He's not deterred by us, either, which is really good news, because none of us have everything together when it comes to following Jesus.** Whether we're more like Judas or Peter than we'd really care to admit, Jesus doesn't stop loving us, because it's not really about us. It's about Him, and His mission, and His calling, and His love. Again, when Jesus tells them to love, "even as I have loved you" this is what the emphasis is on; this is why it's a new commandment. We love how Jesus loves. So that's the first thing I want to highlight here, that Jesus loves us in spite of our imperfect discipleship.

The second thing I want to highlight is that Jesus commands us to do the same thing: to love in spite of others' flaws in discipleship. "A new command I give: love one another." So now we focus on the first part of the statement. He's says this and gives an example here for his disciples to follow, so that people would know we are His disciples. It's not for our own benefit. It's not a selfish reason that we serve. That's not to say we don't get something out of loving people and serving them. But that's not our motivating factor.

Our motivating factor is to demonstrate to the world that Jesus' disciples are different, that we love and take of our own, and of course we love beyond the bounds of Christian fellowship as well. And: **It's all for the sake of showing the world who Jesus is.** We are to be known for our love, so people would be pointed to Him. That's why he gives this commandment to love one another. It's not a suggestion, "You ought to consider loving one another." It's not just a statement of observation, "My disciples love one another." It's a commandment. "Go and love one another, following the example I've given of serving with humility. Love people in the same way that I have."

So, Jesus sets forth an example of love here as he washes his disciples' feet and serves them Communion in spite of their sin and their shortcomings as disciples. It's an act of humble service, an act of love, and a model for us to follow in how to love. And whether you acknowledge your sin or not, whether you're more like Peter or more like Judas, or somewhere in between...**Jesus loves you with a persistent love and commands us to love others in the same way.** He washes not just your feet, but your soul, so you'd be clean, and then he commands us to love as he does. Let His love wash over you tonight, so you'd love others as he does. Let's pray...Amen.