



ROSE
HILL
CHURCH

John 19:38-42
So That You May Believe: John
“Loving like Jesus”

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April 6th, 2023
Maundy Thursday

Today is called “Maundy Thursday” which is always a confusing name. It sounds like “Monday Thursday” but the word is “Maundy.” It is derived from the Latin word for “mandate” or “commandment.” We call this day Maundy Thursday because of what Jesus told his disciples at the Passover meal he ate with them, prior to his crucifixion the next day. He said to them in John 13:34-35, **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34-35).** So, this is the command that he gives on this day: to love one another as Jesus has loved us. It’s the second part that actually makes this new. It’s one thing to love others as ourselves, and Jesus highlights that as well; but to love one another as Jesus loves us is raising the bar even further. It’s a love that’s marked by serving others, as Jesus has just washed their feet as an example, and will shortly go to the cross as an even deeper act of love through service.

The fruit of that extraordinary love for one another will be, as Jesus says, that “everyone will know that you are my disciples.” This is how the good news of Jesus is shared: simply by living it out. So, what does it look like to love one another as Jesus has? Let’s turn to **tonight’s passage** (John 19:38-42) and see if we can get some insights into how we live out this commandment.

So, besides Jesus’ body, there are primarily two people involved here. First, is a guy named Joseph who was from Arimathea, a city whose location is not completely certain, though most scholars and archaeologists place it north or northwest of Jerusalem about 25 miles or so. **John tells us that Joseph “was a disciple of Jesus but a secret one because of his fear of the Jews” (John 19:38).** Specifically, it would have been a fear of Jewish religious leaders, particularly the Sanhedrin, partly because he was one of them. Luke tells us that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, and that he did not agree with their disdain for Jesus. Luke doesn’t explicitly say he was a disciple of Jesus as John does, but he hints at it in telling of Joseph’s disagreement with his fellow Jewish leaders.

The other person is another guy among the Jewish religious leaders who seems to come to faith in Jesus, and that is Nicodemus. **Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin (John 3:1-10; 7:50-52).** As John mentions here, he is the one who came to Jesus at night to ask Jesus some spiritual questions, to find out who Jesus is and what his purpose is in his ministry. We read about that back in John 3. While we are never explicitly told that Nicodemus put his faith in Jesus, we can safely conclude from his actions here with Joseph, that he likely did.

And these two men – who, according to one article I read this week, probably had servants help them with this task, because of their status in society and to keep them from becoming religiously “unclean” by touching a corpse... **They show us what it means to “love one another as Jesus has loved us.”** They show us what it means to live out this commandment. Specifically, they show love toward Jesus, as they give him a proper burial. First, they place his body in a tomb that Joseph essentially donated for this occasion. Normally, criminals – and Jesus was treated like a criminal in his death – had their bodies either left up to rot, or they were placed in a common gravesite. Joseph and Nicodemus want to give Jesus a more dignified resting place for his body.

Second, they take care of Jesus’ body according to Jewish customs. They prepare the body with burial spices, and wrap it in linen cloth. They treat his body with dignity according to their customs and practices.

What they do shows us see a few things about love. First: **1. Love is sacrificial.** Joseph gave up a space in his tomb for Jesus’ body. He wasn’t expecting that it was a short-term rental. He didn’t know Jesus would only be walking out a short time later. No one saw that coming. This was a sacrifice, a space that might otherwise have been for a family member, that he was giving.

Second, we also see that: **2. Love takes action.** They do something to show their love for Jesus. They could have made some great plans, they could have talked about what should be done. They could high-five and fist-bump each other with their really neat ideas...but it’s actually doing these things that

demonstrates love. I came across a list this week of 21 ways to love your spouse. Every single one of them required some kind of action – making something, cooking, writing something out, and so forth.

Third: **3. Love takes time.** This is tied closely to the first two, because if you're going to do something, it is going to take time...and also: Time is the most valuable commodity you and I have, because once we've spent an hour doing something, we can't get that hour back. You can't earn more time. So, there's a sacrifice made in this as well. Money and stuff can be replaced. If I give \$500 as a gift of love to someone, I might have to delay purchasing a new tv or lawnmower or whatever...but eventually, I'll have another \$500. Time doesn't work that way. Our days are numbered, we don't even know what that number is, and when we use some of that time to love someone, we can't earn it back. So, time is an incredible gift.

And then fourth and finally, we see that: **4. Love takes risks.** I know not everyone likes taking risks – like skydiving, riding a motorcycle, buying a house or investing in the stock market, driving on 405 during rush hour, or almost any time of day, really. But love is risky. The first time I told Gwen I loved her, I didn't know how she would respond. I mean, we'd been friends for 10 months, but only dating for 3 days when I told her so. And it had only been like a few weeks since she had told me she'd never date me, only to have a change of heart shortly after that. So, after three days of dating, as we sat at the edge of a pool with our feet dangling in the water, and I told her there that I loved her, I did tell her that I didn't expect her to return those words. And she didn't for nearly 3 more months. That was fine. I was more concerned that when I took that risk and told her I loved her that she would push me in the pool and walk away! But love takes risks. Joseph and Nicodemus are Jewish religious leaders, a part of the very group that helped get Jesus crucified. And here they are, taking proper care of Jesus' body shortly after Jesus breathed his last. This was a risk, because it would identify them as sympathetic to Jesus and his cause.

And, the fact is: **This is exactly how Jesus demonstrated his love as well: with sacrifice, action, time, and risk.**

Jesus' love was sacrificial – from leaving eternity and coming to earth, to going to the cross and bearing the sins of the world, Jesus' life was marked by sacrifice.

Jesus' love was shown in action. He constantly loved others through his actions – listening to them, bringing healing into their lives, travelling from town to town. He rarely had a dull moment.

Jesus' love took time. Jesus gave three years of his life to his public ministry. He spent time with individual people – a woman at a well, to Zacchaeus the tax collector, Nicodemus under the cover of night, the disciples...even those who opposed him, Jesus spent time with.

Lastly, Jesus' love took risks. From becoming human, to publicly teaching and preaching, to standing up for the marginalized, to the death on the cross, Jesus' love took risks.

So, on this Maundy Thursday, we remember this new commandment to love one another *as Christ has loved us*, so that the world would know we are his disciples. So: **First, remember that you are loved by Jesus.** He has loved you with this sacrificial, action-oriented, time-consuming, risk-taking love. You are deeply loved by him, all the way to the cross, to bring you back into relationship with your holy and heavenly Father. And then Second: he commands us to love in the same way. It's a commandment he gives his disciples, and he expects us to do it. **So, let's love with: Sacrifice, Action, Time and Risks.** If you rearrange them you can make it an acrostic – STAR, ARTS, or RATS...whatever helps you remember to keep his commandment to love one another in the same way that he has loved you. Let's pray...Amen.