

John 13:31-35 | EHV

After Judas left, 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 the Son in himself and will glorify him at once.”

“Dear children, I am going to be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

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

I have a portion of a letter to read to you:

Falsehood is not found among them; and they love one another, and they don't hesitate to honor widows; and they rescue the orphans who are being abused. The one who has gives to the one who lacks, without bragging about it. And when they meet a stranger, they take him into their homes and rejoice over him as if he were a brother. . . . And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food themselves, they will fast two or three days just so they can have something to share with the one lacking food. They observe the teachings of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God has commanded them.

The date? about 133 AD. The letter? Written to the Roman Emperor Hadrian by a pagan philosopher trying to explain what Christianity was all about. What a powerful testimony those early Christians gave! The one thing above everything else (except, maybe for their willingness to die) that the unbelieving Greeks and Romans noticed about the Christians: “See, how they love one another!”

Tonight, we continue our series *Three Words of Truth*. Here's a simple, short phrase that summarizes what our entire life in Christ is all about: “Love one another.” Jesus spoke these words in the Upper Room just hours before his arrest, his trial, and crucifixion.

Here we learn, that in Jesus, God...

1. came here to show us love; 2. leaves us here to live in love.

Whenever we read the gospels and meet up with Jesus and hear God in the flesh speak to us, we're faced with this baffling question: “What was the Son of God doing on earth?” God lives in the bliss and glory of heaven. In unapproachable light. Where there's no sadness. No pain. No problems. No heartaches or heartbreaks. So, why would Jesus leave that and come here?

The only answer to that question is love –love unasked, unforced, unearned—the love we can barely begin to grasp. “For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven...” we confess in the Nicene Creed. Jesus came down from heaven, lived the perfect life we owed God and then went to the cross to show us the full extent of his love.

Later in John's Gospel, Jesus says, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” It sounds just like a story out of wartime heroics, right? A grenade rolls in

right next to a group of soldiers and the first guy to see it drops on the grenade, absorbs the blast and dies but saves his buddies in the process.

But Christ's love for you is even greater than that. Picture an American soldier held captive by insurgents and Special Forces coming to the rescue. Would that soldier drop on a grenade to save one of his captors? No way! But how did the Apostle Paul put it? "At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." On the cross, Jesus reconciled enemies. Jesus died to make you and God the best of friends again.

What love Jesus has shown us and continues to show us! No one will ever love you like Jesus. No one pulls more for you. Cares more for you. Provides more for you. He's been there for you. He breathed his last breath for you. He'll always be there for you.

Soon enough Jesus will come back to take us to enjoy the full measure of his love and blessings in heaven. But until Jesus calls us out of this world to follow him to the glory of the Father, he has left us here to do this: "Love one another."

"A new command," Jesus calls it. But was it really? No, not really. This has always been God's will: for us to love him with our hearts, souls, and minds and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

But here's the difference and what makes it "new": no longer are we to love as we love ourselves but "as I have loved you." That new standard and new motivation comes from understanding the gospel. There is no loving anyone or understanding what true love is apart from knowing what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. His love enables and empowers us to really love "as I have loved you..." --true love, like mine, that puts you first, that loves you at all cost, that always does what's best for you not me —"so you must love one another."

This is how Savior our invites us, his children, to live. Love like that is proof that the Spirit has worked thankful faith in our hearts. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

We're living in the last days, this time when Jesus warned us that "because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Mt 24:12). How easy it is to love ourselves. To limit our love. To put conditions on our love. To dictate the time and place and circumstances under which we are going to show love.

But time and time again we marvel at the love of our Savior for even sinners who are so self-concerned, self-centered and self-serving. Every day as we confess our sins and humbly hang our heads, Jesus is right there to assure us that we are his dear, forgiven children. Every day he does not treat us as our sins deserve. Every day he deals with us in mercy and grace. Every day his love causes us to ask with the psalmist, "How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?" (Ps 116:12).

Here is his answer, given by Jesus. Not a long list of ideas, suggestions, principles, guidelines, directives, mandates —no. Just these three simple words of truth: "Love one another." Amen.