

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Easter 5  
Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 18, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

# **“Love One Another”**

John 13:31-35

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus tells us that we as Christians have a new “commandment”: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” It would be easy to take these words and turn it into a Proverb of Moralism. Today, we could have a lesson on the “How-to’s” of Christian living. We could set up guidelines establishing exactly what we must do in order to fulfill Christ’s “command” to love one another. We could do this, but if we did, we would be missing the whole point of the Gospel.

The voice of righteousness through faith does not say, “Do this and you will be right with God,” but rather echoes the words of Jesus who says from the cross, “It is finished” and we hear Him say in John’s Revelation, “It is done” and “I have made all things new.”

Jesus speaks to His disciples, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.” This glory that both Christ and the Father are to receive does not come from any good works or acts of love or charity that you and I show toward one another. God is not made more glorious by what we do. These words were spoken immediately after Judas had left the upper room to betray Jesus. The glorification of Christ is connected with an event that appears to all the people who witnessed it to be the very opposite of glory. Jesus is looking ahead to His death on the cross as He speaks of His glorification.

God is glorified in the fulfillment of His promise to save His children from the guilt of their sin. When Christ died on the cross and rose again, the world

became a different place. All of God's children, since Adam and Eve, had been groaning and waiting in anticipation for the second Adam, Christ, to come and redeem the people – to make all things new.

We are the beneficiaries of this great promise that God fulfilled in Christ on Easter weekend. During this Easter season, we continue to celebrate this great event. We praise God that we do not have to go where Jesus went – that we do not have to suffer and die on a cross, especially because the spilling of our blood would do nothing to redeem us from our slavery to sin. Our sins are forgiven only because the Christ, the Son of God had His blood spilled as the sinless sacrifice who willingly took all the sin of the world upon Himself. As Paul says, "He who was without sin became sin for us." He became the personification of sin so that we can be righteous in the sight of God our Father. This is the promise God made to Adam and throughout the Old Testament.

Today, we gather together as the recipients of the forgiveness won through Christ. Without the real blood of Christ shed on the cross, the Word of God we gather to hear, the promises made in our Baptism, the flesh and blood of Christ in the sacrament would be of no consequence in our lives. All of human history revolves around and is focused on Christ's cross and empty tomb.

Therefore, all of human history has been spent pondering how these events affect our lives. What must be done in order for us to receive these blessings? Once again, this is not some "How-to" of Christian living. It is not about "me" and what I do. Our sinful self always wants to hear Christ's words of grace and promise and turn it into something that we can somehow participate in to make us "more saved" – whatever that would mean.

When Christ speaks of this "new command," it is the only time that John records Jesus using the word "new." John is telling us that this is something very important. Love has always been at the heart of the commandments. Earlier, Jesus said that the greatest commandments are these: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself" – which is the summary of the two tables of the Law (of the 10 Commandments).

The new commandment is not simply a ratcheting up of the degree of love, but it brings all of these great commands of God to narrow our focus onto Christ. “Love one another as I have loved you.” In a matter of hours, Jesus is going to demonstrate the depth of His love.

He says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” Where? In the crucifixion. “Where I am going you cannot come.” The cross, the descent into hell, the empty grave brings to us, we who could not complete that journey, it brings to us complete and total victory over sin, death, and Satan.

Jesus does not endure the nails of the cross and shed His blood so that He can now instruct His disciples to go and live morally virtuous lives and be right with God by loving your neighbor. Jesus would have joined with the Pharisees if that was His message. There would be no need for the cross.

“A new command I give to you, that you love one another.” If this was simply about keeping the law and having love for your neighbor in a 10 commandments kind of way, that would not really be a “new” command. And, again, there would be no need for the cross. What is new is the glorification of God in the dying and rising of the Son of Man. And now Jesus commissions them with this “new” truth to go out and show love for one another so that all people will know that you are My disciples.

And how does Jesus define love to His disciples in the upper room, later in John’s Gospel? “Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends.” Read John chapters 14-17 and hear how “love” and “command” are used. This is not simply about doing God’s will by being better neighbors. The Holy Spirit inspiring us to love our neighbor is the fruit of the Gospel – and is a very good thing. It is a proper response to the Gospel. Please don’t hear me wrong as if our words and actions have no bearing in life.

But Jesus “new command” is about the Gospel. And His disciples would carry this new truth to the ends of the earth and they would lay down their lives for the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another, Jesus says.

Just as Jesus suffers and dies so that you and I have the Gospel and will live

forever in His eternal kingdom, so also Jesus says to the Eleven, that you will suffer and die (in your ministry) so that all people will have the Gospel and they will know that you are my disciples because you confess the cross and empty grave.

This is what sets us apart from those who are outside of Christ and His Church. No one can look at you and see if you are baptized. No one can look into your heart and see if you truly believe in God. No one can look at you and see that you are forgiven. Jesus tells us that the only way that people can know that we are Christians is what we confess with our mouths and by observing the way that we treat one another. John also writes that anyone who says they love God but hate their brother is a liar.

As is printed in the bulletin in the “Word from Martin Luther,” Luther says, “This makes it difficult to preach to people. No matter how one preaches, things go wrong; the people always hedge. If one does not preach on faith, nothing but hypocritical works result. But if one confines one’s preaching to faith, no works ensue. In brief, the outcome is either works without faith or faith without works. Therefore the sermon must address itself to those who accept and apprehend both faith and works; the others, who do not want to follow, remain behind.”

If there is no difference between the way that we speak or act and the way that people outside the church speak or act, the message of the cross and the empty tomb will never be heard. What you have is the promise of a crucified and risen Lord and Savior. The response to this promise is to love one another, and boldly confess the crucified and risen Son of God that others may know and share the joy that we have in Christ. Amen. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!