

The New Commandment

John 13.31-35

Series: Signs of Life

Corona Connections

November 15, 2020

I. Leaving

- A. One of the most difficult times in our lives was when we were leaving Morgantown, WV to come here
 - 1. It's hard to believe that process was unfolding eight years ago!
 - 2. We had been there for more than three decades
 - a. The Lord had led us into ministry during that time
 - b. It was a community and a church that we had grown to love – warts and all!
 - c. We had raised our children there
 - d. We had stockpiled a multitude of memories
 - e. And enjoyed dozens of friendships
- B. When it started to become apparent that the Lord was moving us here we were faced with the troubling task of telling people we love that we were leaving them
 - 1. Some of them needed to know earlier than others
 - a. They were involved in the process as references
 - 2. But the hardest ones to tell were the ones for whom we felt the most spiritually responsible
 - a. We had developed the kind of relationships with those folks that only come through deep spiritual trials
 - b. We had laughed with each other
 - c. We had cried with each other
 - d. There times when we would encourage
 - e. And there were times when we would challenge
 - f. But through it all, they loved us and we loved them
 - g. And we feared that in some cases they might struggle when we were no longer right around the corner or a quick phone call away
 - 3. But we had to tell them
 - a. We felt responsible for them
 - b. We deeply longed for them to continue in the Lord
 - c. Growing more deeply in His love
 - d. But this would be hard for them; it would be a blow
- C. Jesus finds Himself in a similar situation
 - 1. In the 13th Chapter of John Jesus has been meeting with those kinds of special people
 - a. His disciples
 - b. They had been with Him through three years of ministry in Galilee and Judea
 - c. They had eaten with Him; they had slept where He slept
 - d. They had witnessed His greatest miracles

- e. They were there when the nominal followers turned their backs on Him
 - f. They saw the animosity of the Jewish leaders against Him
 - g. They had been taught by Jesus
 - h. They had been challenged by Jesus
 - i. They had been encouraged by Jesus
2. But, as you recall, in the upper room that evening Jesus set in motion the events which would lead to His crucifixion
 - a. He prophesied that one of them would betray Him
 - b. He identified the one to the apostle John
 - c. Then he released Judas to go out and do what he would do quickly
 3. And having done so, Jesus begins to prepare those for whom He was spiritually responsible for His departure
 - a. The first part of that preparation is found in the verses we consider this morning

D. Text

1. **John 13:31–35** (NKJV) — 31 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. 33 Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

II. **Jesus’ Journey**

- A. The first thing we see in this passage is that Jesus tells them He’s leaving
 1. He does that in a remarkable way
 - a. He doesn’t describe the events that will take Him away from them
 - b. He doesn’t give them a definitive destination in any kind of geographical sense
 - c. He doesn’t detail the route that He would take, or the stops along the way
- B. But He does describe a journey
 1. It’s a theological journey, a spiritual journey – rather than a geographical one
 2. It’s as if Jean and I would have shared with our friends, not that we were on our way to Florida
 - a. But that God was beckoning us to walk with Him in a ministry that would take us more deeply into His providential care and leading
 - b. That God was calling us to deepen our faith and trust in Him
 - c. Calling us to go beyond our comfort zone
 3. It’s as if we would tell our friends more about our spiritual journey than about a geographical destination

- a. And in reality, it is that description of our spiritual journey which would be more beneficial to our friends
- C. The journey that Jesus describes is a **journey of glory**
 - 1. **John 13:31–32** (NKJV) — 31 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.”
 - 2. Do you see what Jesus is doing?
 - a. He’s preparing them for His departure
 - b. But He’s describing where He’s going in terms of glory
 - c. Five times He uses the term **“glory”**
 - d. Gk root is **“doxa”**
 - 3. Doxa – where we get our word doxology
 - a. Doxology is when we conclude our meditations and descriptions of the person and work of God by praising Him for His nature and character
 - b. Doxa – estimation of the worth of something
 - c. Ancient Greek – estimation could be good or bad
 - d. But by NT times it had come to represent only the good, that which is praiseworthy, admirable, worthy of adoration and praise
- D. What’s unique about Jesus’ use of the words related to glory is that He uses them in two tenses
 - 1. Three times the tense is aorist – which essentially refers to an event, something that takes place at a point in time
 - a. That something, as we’ve already seen earlier in John, is the crucifixion
 - 2. Once Judas has been released to do his dastardly deed, Jesus says, “Now the Son of Man is glorified”
 - a. In the crucifixion, the glory of Jesus will be on display
 - b. The nature of His worth, His value, His praiseworthy estimation will be evident
 - 3. In fact, not only will the glory of Jesus be on display in the crucifixion, so will the glory of God
 - a. “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him”
- E. What is it about the crucifixion that brings glory to Jesus and the Father?
 - 1. Just think of what happens in the cross
 - 2. The **holy justice of God** is on display
 - a. A holy, righteous God cannot fail to judge sin
 - b. Sin is cosmic rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe
 - c. Sin is transgression of the Law of the Judge of all the earth
 - d. Sin is rejection of the authority of the King of kings
 - e. Sin is an attack on the nature and character of God
 - f. Sin is destructive of the image of God in humanity
 - g. And the holy, altogether righteous God must judge sin
 - 3. And in the cross of Christ, all the sins of all those who would ever believe

- in Jesus Christ are judged
- a. And in those moments, when Jesus experienced the wrath of God, all of those sins, indeed the very sinful natures of all those who would ever believe in Him, are judged
4. So in the cross, the justice and righteousness and holiness of God the Father is on display
 - a. And thus His glory is on display
 5. Even more significant, in the cross of Christ **the love of Christ, and the love of the Father**, is on display
 - a. **John 3:16** (NKJV) — 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
 - b. **1 John 4:10** (NKJV) — 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
 - c. **Romans 5:8** (NKJV) — 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- F. Difficult to imagine a more wondrous display of the glory of God and of His Son Jesus Christ than the crucifixion
1. Holiness of God
 2. Justice of God
 3. Righteousness of God
 4. Love of God
 5. Mercy of God
 6. Grace of God
 - a. Are all on display in the crucifixion
 7. “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him”
- G. But then there’s another use of the word “glory” or “doxa” in these verses
1. And that use is in the future tense
 2. **John 13:32** (NKJV) — 32 “If God is glorified in Him, God *will* also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.”
 3. This is the glory which Jesus enjoyed with the Father in heaven before He came to earth as a human being
 - a. The refulgent glory
 - b. The “brightness” of the glory of God as Hebrews puts it; the radiance of the glory of God
 4. **John 17:5** (NKJV) — 5 “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”
- H. That’s why this is a journey of glory
1. A journey through the glory of the crucifixion
 - a. Into the refulgent, radiant, brightness of the immediate presence of the glory of God
 2. That’s where Jesus was headed
 - a. That’s where Jesus is now
 3. **Revelation 1:12–16** (NKJV) — 12 Then I turned to see the voice that

spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

- I. What a magnificent image!
 1. What a wonderful encouragement to these beloved believers
 - a. Who were about to see their friend, teacher, master, savior taken from their presence
 2. They needed to know of this glorious journey of Jesus

III. Disciples' Dilemma

A. **John 13:33** (NKJV) — 33 “Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you.”

1. This is their dilemma
 - a. Jesus is leaving
 - b. He’s taking His journey of glory
 - c. But they can’t come with Him

B. **Departure of the example of love**

1. Jesus Himself models the kind of love that is only characteristic of the Father
 - a. The kind of love which is expected of the people of God
2. And that model, that example, is leaving
3. It’s common for us to consider various abstract concepts in our lives, our church life, in our business, or whatever
 - a. And if it’s an abstract concept, like love, we would ask, “What does that look like?”
4. If love is the abstract concept, love looks like Jesus
 - a. If we want to know what love looks like, look at Jesus
5. But Jesus is telling them that He’s leaving

C. **Transfer of love to one another**

1. Now remember how this chapter started
 - a. Jesus washing the disciples’ feet
 - b. And He told them ...
 - c. **John 13:14–15** (NKJV) — 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.
2. Jesus has already indicated that even though He’s leaving, they are to continue loving each other
 - a. Serving each other

- b. Washing one another's feet
 - c. Which is a case in point of what loving service looks like
- D. So Jesus is leaving
- 1. Leaving on a journey of glory
 - 2. They can't go with Him
 - 3. But the love that Jesus used to demonstrate to them, they are to manifest that kind of love to one another
 - 4. The love of Jesus is to be transferred to the disciples in their love for each other

IV. Captivating Command

- A. So then Jesus makes it explicit
- 1. He issues a command – a captivating command once we unpack it a bit
 - 2. **John 13:34** (NKJV) — 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
- B. **The old commandment**
- 1. What was the old commandment?
 - a. In fact the new commandment sounds a lot like the old commandment
 - 2. **Leviticus 19:18** (NKJV) — 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
 - a. Love your neighbor as yourself
 - 3. In fact, when Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment in the law, he summarized the two tables of the law
 - a. **Mark 12:30–31** (NKJV) — 30 “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
 - 4. So when Jesus says “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another,” what's new about that?
- C. **The new object**
- 1. The context in Leviticus has to do with the people of Israel, the Jewish people
 - a. “The children of your people”
 - 2. But this text applies to all believers of Jesus
 - a. Not just Jewish people – though it certainly includes Jewish believers
 - b. But by extension, to all of those who believe in Jesus
 - c. Including all of you! Including Gentiles!
 - 3. Jesus has already begun to expand the Jewish understanding of neighbor
 - a. Love your neighbor as yourself
 - b. Remember the question posed by the lawyer, “And who is my neighbor?” (**Luke 10.29**)

- c. Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan
- d. Blew the Jews' minds! That the hated Samaritans could actually be considered neighbors – and that they should be the objects of love as well as Jews!
- 4. This is a new commandment because there is a new object of love
 - a. Not just Jewish believers, but all believers in Jesus
- 5. Now it should be noted that this love is not to exclude those who are not believers in Jesus
 - a. But as we'll see in a moment, the primary admonition and application has to do with believers
 - b. We are to love everyone
 - c. But especially those who belong to the household of faith
(Galatians 6.10)

D. **The new standard**

- 1. Even more important is a new standard
 - a. **John 13:34** (NKJV) — 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
- 2. The old standard – love your neighbor as yourself
 - a. The new standard – love as Christ loved you
- 3. How did Christ love you?
 - a. He died for you!
 - b. While you were still a sinner, He died for you!
- 4. He left His glory behind, He came to this planet, lived an altogether holy and righteous life, even while experiencing the full range of temptation
 - a. Suffered under the oppression of the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities
 - b. Died on the cross, taking upon Himself the just punishment for all the sins of all those who would ever believe in Him
- 5. And did all of that for you
 - a. Long before you exercised the very first impulses of faith in Him
 - b. While you were yet sinners!
- 6. And that's how we're to love one another
 - a. As Christ loved us
 - b. He gave Himself up for the church (Ephesians 5.25)
- 7. What an incredible standard?
 - a. How can we ever do that?
- 8. The truth is, we can't

E. **The new power**

- 1. That's why Jesus gives us a new power
- 2. We're getting ahead of ourselves a bit
 - a. Later in John – during this upper room episode – Jesus will promise the Holy Spirit
 - b. He would leave, and the Holy Spirit would be “another comforter” or “another advocate”

- c. Who will in you, manifesting the desires and inclinations of Jesus
- d. Who will empower you to fulfill what Christ commands in this new commandment
- 3. Love one another – as Christ has loved us!
 - a. What a standard!
 - b. Only possible by the Spirit He provides for us, who indwells us

V. **Definitive Identification**

- A. Finally, in these moments of preparation for these disciples as He prepares to leave them, He motivates them
 - 1. He compels them to seek to fulfill this new commandment
 - a. And He does it by a definitive identification
 - b. He identifies how to tell if you're a Christian
- B. **John 13:35** (NKJV) — 35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - 1. This is an astonishing declaration
 - a. I tremble every time I think of its implications
- C. We're to love one another – as Christ has loved us!
 - 1. And the world will make a judgment about whether you and I are real disciples of Jesus
 - a. Whether we are genuine Christians
 - b. On the basis of our love for one another
- D. It's impossible to miss how this has impacted the church just in these recent months
 - 1. We've gone through the most contentious election most of us can remember in our nation
 - a. And believers in Jesus have often had different views about that election
 - b. And those differences are important
 - c. They ought to be discussed – but rarely are with those who have different convictions on political matters
 - d. I'm not diminishing the significance of those issue
 - 2. But the problem is not that believers disagree about policy and politicians
 - a. The problem is that believers have often been unloving in how we've engaged in conversations with one another
- E. And when believers have been unloving with one another
 - 1. The world has rendered a judgment
 - a. That those people are not real Christians
 - 2. Because Jesus has given the world the right to make that judgment
 - a. **John 13:35** (NKJV) — 35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- F. There are important policy implications arising from this election
 - 1. We ought to be concerned about them
- G. But the more important implication is that the world is watching the church
 - 1. And the world is saying, “This Christianity stuff is bogus; it's nonsense.”

2. “Because these people who say they are Christians, they don’t even love each other.”
 3. Not even that they don’t love the world – they don’t even love their own brothers and sisters in Jesus
 4. “Why would I ever be interested in Jesus when these so-called Christians don’t even love their own people?”
- H. I’m very concerned about a number of things that relate to our election
1. But I’m much more concerned about this
 2. Because Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- VI. Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- A. How do you express your love for your brothers and sisters in Jesus?
1. There has never been a more important time for that love to be expressed than right now

Benediction

Ephesians 3:17–19 (NKJV) — 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.