

Love one another as I have loved you John 13:1-17 & 31-35

At the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples were gathered together in an upper room to celebrate the feast of Passover. The Passover was one of the major festivals of the Jewish year where they remembered how God had saved his people from slavery in Egypt. (See Exodus 12).

When Jesus and his disciples were assembled, Jesus did an extraordinary thing – he took a towel and a bowl of water and washed his disciples feet. He told them that this was to show them that they should love and serve each other, and other people, and always be willing to help others.

Jesus gave the disciples, and us, a new commandment a commandment that is based on the disciples' relationship to him and to one another. He said, "I give you a new commandment: that you love one another... Just as I have loved you, you also should love one other."

If Christians were to love each other the way Jesus showed his love to the world, ...then it would be unmistakable! It would be a love that the world would stand in amazement to see. That the world cannot comprehend.

Jesus did not simply say, "Love one another." Jesus was very specific about the kind of love his disciples must share. He said ... "Just as I have loved you." And His love is unconditional, Jesus' love is limitless. Jesus' love requires self-sacrifice.

Jesus sacrificed himself ...out of His love for us. One hundred years after Saint John wrote his gospel, the famous theologian Tertullian reported what the non-Christians of his day said of those who were followers of the Christ: "See how they love one another!" "How ready (they are) to die for one another!" The message of Christ is sacrificial love.

Do our actions portray to the world how deeply we truly love each other? What would cause them to say, "See how they love one another!?" "See how ready they are willing to die for one another!"

John tells us in his first epistle, "Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action." What does this love look like in our lives?

Sacrificial love should look like: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These qualities are evidence that the Holy Spirit is present and operating in our lives. If you allow the Holy Spirit to permeate you, to work within you, then every single one of these qualities will be apparent in your life.

We are called to not only have this love, but also to share this love with one another, and to those that God places into our lives. We are called to share this love especially with those who will not, or cannot, return it.

Think for a moment about how you can show God's love to others. Many people are now isolated at home. Could you offer to get them some shopping or medication?

If you are not physically able to do much how about giving someone a call. They might not have spoken to anyone for a few days. Or maybe write them a card?

We can also pray. On that first Maundy Thursday, after they had finished the meal, Jesus led his disciples into a nearby garden to pray. But the disciples fell asleep. Then Judas betrayed Jesus and Jesus was arrested. The disciples all fled. Peter sneaked into the courtyard of the High Priest to see what would happen, but then he denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus wanted his disciples to pray with him and for him. He wants us to pray to him. As we spend time in prayer, we are drawn closer to God and our hearts are filled with hope rather than despair.

As we face the prospect of the Coronavirus disrupting our lives for a long time, and sadly causing the death of many, there will be a lot of despair in our communities. God calls us to be messengers of hope. There have been many stories of people looking out for, and supporting, their neighbours, friends and colleagues. So let us share God's love with everyone we meet and let us bring hope to our communities.

Jesus is asking each one of us to love one another, just as he loves us. God's love is unconditional, so, let us love one another, as God has loved us. Amen!