

Love One Another

King of Glory Lutheran
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
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John 13:31-35

³¹ When he (Judas) had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love is an action. Jesus loved with forgiveness, selflessly, with understanding. We are God's hands and feet and hearts; called to love God's children.

The story from Acts tells of believers in Christ, criticizing Peter for eating with people who were not Jewish, but had come to know God. This may sound strange to us, but Jews had clear laws about what kinds of food to eat and not eat. To share supper eating strange – unclean – food wasn't proper. Let alone eating with people who hadn't been raised with all the customs of the Jewish faith.

As Peter explained what happened he said this, “So I started in, talking. Before I'd spoken half a dozen sentences, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did on us the first time. I remembered Jesus' words: 'John baptized with water; you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' So I ask you: If God gave the same exact gift to them as to us when we believed in the Master Jesus Christ, how could I object to God?" Hearing it all laid out like that, they quieted down. And then, as it sank in, they started praising God. "It's really happened! God has broken through to the other nations, opened them up to Life!" (The Message)

For centuries, God had been in covenant relationship with the Jewish people. For them to realize God now wanted to also be in relationship with non-Jews was challenging. Bringing together two cultures, two peoples together under one God...their God.

Yet it was exactly what Jesus instructed them to do. Love one another. “They Will Know we are Christians by our Love” was composed by Peter Scholtes, a Catholic priest in the 1960's. If you know it sing along!

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord;
And we pray that all unity will one day be restored.
Chorus: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Jesus said, 'Just as I have loved you, you should love one another.' If that's so, what did Jesus' love look like? He loved selflessly. He gave of Himself by healing and teaching and eating meals with people. He gave so much of Himself, that he regularly took time away to recharge and renew His spirit. And ultimately, He gave His life.

Not only did Jesus love selflessly, He loved with understanding and forgiveness. When the disciples couldn't understand, Jesus had patience with them...most of the time. He listened, really listened to people who needed to be heard. Zaccheaus. The woman at the well. And when forgiveness was called for, He offered it.

How do we love selflessly? How do we love with understanding and forgiveness?

Lynn Hamilton, a King of Glory member serves each week at the Food Bank. Here's what she says: As Christians we are called to serve. It feeds my soul. Because they come each week, I get to know them. I love these people. You know you are really helping people – they leave with food. That's why I'm there...those two reasons. Service and love.

Like any of you who regularly volunteer somewhere in town, Lynn could be doing anything else for those hours each week. Yet did you hear what she said? 'We are called to serve. It feeds my soul. I love these people.'

Our Savior's Lutheran church in East Boston, hosts a Soup Kitchen in the basement. Sandra Aleman-Nijar and Pastor Britta Carlson welcome people in from the streets, particularly homeless men. There they can get a hot meal, take a shower, get connected with basic services. One man reflects. "Here I receive love and respect." Another says, "I got bullied and robbed. I did the same to others. But when Sandra first opened this place, she was caring. She did it for the homeless. I had nowhere to go and this is my home." To which Sandra adds, "Just because I'm handing out a plate of food, doesn't make me better." We must remember the poor!

Let's sing:

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand;

And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land. (And they'll know...)

At a Loveland homeless meeting this week I was reminded that there are 600 homeless students in Thompson Valley school district. 600 including elementary students. These children and youth are couch surfing, staying with friends or sleeping in their cars. How do we as a community feel about that? I can't imagine trying to think about math or science or spelling after sleeping in the car. First United Presbyterian under the Pastor Amy Morgan has been gifting graduating seniors who are homeless, chrome books for the last several years. This year they gave away 20 chrome books. What can we do to assist these unhoused students? Truth be told, most of us are a couple paychecks away from being unhoused ourselves.

Mike Dodge, King of Glory member who has been leading our SafeLot program says this about serving the homeless. "This is the easiest thing I've ever done with the greatest impact to help people. I had a little apprehension at first about who these people were. But they are like my own next-door neighbors. They are such nice people and so grateful. Their gratitude is the only reward I need."

And there are many ways to serve and many people to serve in love! Deb Hasler drives for Saint. These are her thoughts: "People are hurting and need help. I can give back so that someone can get to the hair dresser, grocery store or doctor's office. The reward is their complete gratitude." Then she shared a story about her neighbor who speaks only broken English and Deb speaks only broken Spanish.

Seeing this neighbor struggling while out doing yardwork, Deb went over and asked where the son and husband were. The son had moved to Denver and the husband was out of state because that's where he found work. Now Deb loves gardening, so she asked this woman if she could help. Together they got the lawn mowed. The dear woman showed up on Deb's doorstep later with a watermelon. In her broken English, she said, "Thank you!"

We will work with each other, we will work side by side;

We will work with each other, we will work side by side;

And we'll guard humans*ⁱ dignity and save humans pride. (And they'll know..)

My question church is...

can we love one another in the ways Jesus did so there might be unity on earth?

If so say, we can!

Can we walk with one another like Jesus did? If so say, we can!

Can we work with each other like Jesus did? We can!

Will we love one another? We will!

Will we walk with one another?

Will we work with each other? We will! Amen!

¹ Ruth Ann Loughry changed 'man's' to 'humans'