

"Maundy" comes from the Latin word, *mandatum*, or mandate. Tonight, Maundy Thursday, we consider the mandate or the command of our Lord that we are to love one another. We're going to talk about that, about what it has to do with our walk with God and with one another.

## PRAYER

**READ John 13:34-35: Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

**"Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."** That's a pretty tall order. As an illustration of what that meant Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Remember what Peter said to Jesus when he found out what the Lord was going to do? He said, **"You shall never wash my feet!"** thinking this was the pious thing to say to his teacher. But Jesus said, **"If I do not wash you, you have no share with me" (John 13:8).**

Jesus shared his love with other people throughout his ministry. I remember his ministry to the Samaritan woman, how he revealed to her his knowledge of how she had been married 5-times and that the man she lived with was not her husband. She recognized him as a prophet, but he did not condemn her. Jesus ministry to this woman was from his heart.

I remember the prostitute who came and washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and how he defended her before the religious mucky mucks and affirmed her as a child of God. That ministry was also from his heart.

I remember Jesus on the Cross, and how one of the criminals there, hanging alongside him, confessed his faith, and Jesus said to him, **"Today, you will be with me in Paradise."** You can't get much closer to Jesus' heart than that!

And I remember the centurion who stood at the foot of the Cross, who heard Jesus proclaim, **"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."** And the centurion praised God and confessed, **"Certainly, this man was innocent!"** Jesus ministered to that man too from his heart.

Throughout the Gospels that's what we see. Jesus ministering to people from his heart. He empathized with them. He felt their pain. He met them where they lived. And he touched their lives with his heartfelt love.

I wonder what happened in the lives of these people after their encounters with Jesus. Peter wrote in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter that we should **“love one another earnestly from a pure heart”** (1 Peter 1:22), and that we should **“keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins”** (1 Peter 4:8).

I think Peter was speaking from experience. You'll remember how he betrayed Jesus on Good Friday, how he denied knowing Jesus three times. And you'll remember that after his resurrection Jesus loved Peter and filled his heart with hope.

Thereafter Peter encouraged Christians to love one another, and he said love covers a multitude of sins, meaning that if you're loved, you're forgiven, and when we love in return, we're forgiving those who've trespassed against us.

Peter recognized that his love, his deep heartfelt love which he later wrote about, was rooted in the love he had received from Jesus. That was why he was able to talk about how we must love each other with so much confidence. He'd felt the love, he knew what it was like to be washed in the love of his savior, Jesus, and to be made whole by it. That's what he was saying.

I think that's the answer. This is how we fulfill Jesus mandate to “love one another.” Just like Peter, like the Samaritan woman, the prostitute, the thief on the cross, and the centurion, we must receive the love of Jesus. When we have personally felt loved by God, then we have something to share.

Jesus even said this when he warned Peter what would happen if he didn't wash his feet: **“If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (John 13:8)**. In other words, if you don't let me love you, you can't be my disciple for you won't be able to fulfill the mandate I'm about to give you.

Friends in Christ, do you want to be a better Christian? Let Jesus love you.

Do you want to be a better mother or father? Let Jesus love you.

Do you want to be a better brother or sister, student or worker? Let Jesus love you.

I cannot count the number of times I've heard people tell me that they are afraid they do not measure up to the expectations of God, that they feel unworthy of his love, that they're not sure whether they're going to heaven or hell.

Brothers and sister, Jesus loves you so very, very much. He died for you, he rose from the grave for you. And he will come again in glory just for you, because he loves you. And as we know, **“love covers over a multitude of sins”!**

Jesus loves you so much he has blessed the meal we are going to receive at this table in a few moments. He have given us his body and blood in the bread and wine, and he has promised us forgiveness of sins when we eat it in faith.

So often I think we receive this gift as an obligation, as in, I receive the Lord's Supper because God won't love me if I don't.

We are so confused! We eat this meal because we want to receive the love of Christ into our own hearts!

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, you are loved by God. He wants you to know that. You are his son, his daughter. He wants you to know that. You are an heir of his heavenly kingdom and all that lies there in. He wants you to know that too because he loves you.

Be loved, my friends. Meditate on that love, that love that dug us out of the pit of darkness, the abyss of shame, and raised us up into the light. When we do that, meditating on the love God has for us despite ourselves, then we can begin to love one another just as he has loved us.

This week let us meditate on the power of God's love in our lives, how he loves us just as we are. He's forgiven us for all of our sins and he's made us his children.

Let us consider how this is true love, this forgiving, empowering love God has for us, and let us give thanks for it.

And this week let us look for an opportunity to share the love of God with another person who really needs it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.