

John 13:31-38

A new commandment I give you

Tim Anderson 4/3/2018

Geraldine was rostered to preach today,
but she's come down with a nasty cold.
Germy places Chemist Shops.

Well let me remind you where we are.
We're in the upper room.
Jesus has washed his disciples feet.
He's told the disciples that one of them will betray him.
He's given Judas a piece of bread,
which was a signal to the inquisitive Peter and John
that it was Judas who would betray him.
"As soon as Judas had taken the bread,
he went out.

And it was night."

Do you think John is dead keen to make sure we know the time?

Not a bit of it.

It was night.

It was darkness.

It was the time when evil was gathering its forces
in a final deadly assault against the Son of God.

It was night.

"When he was gone,

Jesus said,

'Now the Son of Man is glorified

and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him,

God will glorify the Son in himself,

and will glorify him at once.'"

So Jesus waits until the betrayer is out of the room.

And then he lets his disciples in on the big secret.

Now.

Right now.

Because Judas has gone to do this act of evil,
Jesus is glorified.

Have you ever had things turn out
the exact opposite of how you planned it?

You know the kind of thing.

You plan a surprise birthday party for someone.

And they get such a shock they have a heart attack and die.

I hope that has never happened to you.

But that's the kind of reversal that's happening here.

Satan has a deadly assault planned on Jesus.

But this will result in Jesus' glory.

It's easy to skip over the phrase 'the Son of Man'.

"That's just what Jesus calls himself."

That's true in Mark.

But in John, Jesus calls himself the Son of Man
when he is to be glorified.

It's a sign of great glory.

Listen to the verses in the prophet Daniel that provide the background.

"In my vision at night I looked,

and there before me was one like a son of man,

coming with the clouds of heaven.

He approached the Ancient of Days

and was led into his presence.

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power;

all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

that will not pass away,

and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

That prophecy is about to be fulfilled.

Jesus is the Son of Man.

God the Father is the Ancient of Days.

When is Jesus led into the Father's presence?

When he has gone to the cross and been raised to life.

And what happens then?
Paul tells the Philippians,
"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."

Yes that's it.

That's the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy.

Authority, glory and sovereign power.

All nations and peoples of every language worshiped him.

And he rules forever.

Not exactly what the devil was hoping for
when he prompted Judas to betray Jesus.

I wonder if you see the glory of God in the cross.

Do you see all nations and peoples of every language worshipping Jesus?

You see, sometimes we preach a cut down version of the gospel.

Sometimes we preach the gospel is this:

Jesus died for my sins -

I'm forgiven -

Jesus is taking me to heaven.

Well that's nice for me.

But it somewhat skimps on the glory of Jesus.

Jesus died for the sins of the world.

Jesus died that all nations and peoples of every language
would worship him.

And he invites me to come and join the group.

There are some big holes in the cut down version of the gospel.

If you preach the cut down version of the gospel,
where is church?

Jesus died for my sins -

I'm forgiven -

Jesus is taking me to heaven.
The church is missing.
If that's the gospel we preach,
then we need to add some rationalisation about why church is important.
But if you preach the real gospel-
Jesus died for the sins of the world.
Jesus died that all nations and peoples of every language
would worship him.
And he invites me to come and join the group.
Well come and join the group -
church is there in the gospel message.
It's the foretaste of what is going to happen
around the throne of God forever.

Well there's lots more that could be said about Jesus being glorified.
But we need to move on,
because there is some really important stuff to get to.
Jesus knows that the moment of his glorification is imminent.
Judas has left,
the cross is at hand.
So what does he do?
He prepares his disciples for his departure.
"My children,
I will be with you only a little while longer.
You will look for me,
and just as I told the Jews,
so I tell you now:
where I am going, you cannot come."
I'm going.
You can't come with me.
So what are you going to do instead?

Here's the number one command from Jesus
to tell us what to do with ourselves
while we are waiting to join the heavenly crowd worshiping him.
"A new command I give you:

love one another.
As I have loved you,
so you must love one another."
Here is our task.
Love one another.
Easy to say.
Not so easy to do.
But that is our calling.

Let's ask a couple of questions to tease it out a bit.
Firstly, in what sense is this a new commandment?
Long before this,
One of the teachers of the law asked Jesus,
what is the most important command in the OT Law.
And Jesus replied,
"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.
Love your neighbour as yourself."
To love is an old command.
Old because it's from the books
written by Moses 1500 years before Christ,
and old because Jesus had already told the people
that's what they should do.
So in what sense is this a new commandment?
Well the bit that is new is 'As I have loved you'.
It's not love you neighbour as yourself.
It's love your neighbour in the same way Jesus loved you.
And make no mistake,
the bar has just got higher.
Is it a high bar to love your neighbour as yourself?
Yes it is.
Too right it is.
I'm very good at looking after my own interests.
To shower my neighbour with that sort of care,
is a high bar.
But what about to love my neighbour as Jesus has loved me?
Well how did Jesus love me?

In the context of this passage,
Jesus has just washed his disciples feet.
He has done the most humble act of service.
And it has blown their minds.
That's how Jesus has loved.
But even more than that,
it's impossible at this moment,
as Judas has just stepped out into the night to betray Jesus,
not to look forward to the cross.
How has Jesus loved us?
He willingly went to the cross to save us.
Love one another as I have loved you.
Yes that does set the bar even higher
than loving your neighbour as yourself.

Now who here doesn't struggle with loving your neighbour as yourself?
Anyone find that easy?
What does it add in practical terms
to love as Jesus loved us?
Well I think it means you can lay down your life.
Christian history is full of stories of martyrs.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer laid down his life.
Just prior to WWII,
He willingly returned to Germany from America
just at the time when everyone else who was able was fleeing.
He willingly chose to be part of resisting Hitler
knowing that the consequence for being caught would be death.

One of John's successors was Polycarp.
John appointed him as bishop of Smyrna in modern day Turkey.
When he was an old man,
he was presented with a choice by the Roman Emperor's soldiers.
"Burn incense to Caesar,
or we will burn you."
Polycarp's reply was,
"Eighty and six years have I served him,

and he has done me no wrong.
How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?
You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season,
and after a little while is quenched;
but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment
that is prepared for the wicked."

I guess you could say to me
that Polycarp was loving Jesus
but he wasn't loving other people.
But I would disagree.
Polycarp was loving us.
His example of laying down his life
loves me
by giving me something to inspire me.

OK so we answered the question,
"In what sense is this a new command?"
The answer is it gives us a new standard of love.
The love that Jesus showed for us.

Second question.

"Is this a narrow command?"

Let me explain.

Some people don't like the new command,
Because it seems less broad than 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

Why is that?

Because it says,

'Love one another'.

One another means love fellow believers.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said love your enemies.

Why is he only telling his disciples here to love one another?

I think the way to understand it is this.

Jesus is not saying to love the people of the world less.

He is saying to love your Christian brothers and sisters more.

Yes we are to love our enemies.
Yes we are to love our neighbours as ourselves.
And we are also to love our brothers and sisters as Jesus loved us.
That's the very highest standard of all.

This is how Paul puts it writing to the Galatian Christians.
"Therefore, as we have opportunity,
let us also do good to all people,
especially to those who belong to the family of believers."
We don't set one love up against another.
We love everyone and especially our brothers and sisters.

It makes sense to love your family in a special way.
You have opportunities to love them
in a way that you can't love other people.
Supposing I wake up in the morning a bit irritable.
Then who can I love by choosing not to be snappy?
Well it's my family.
They are the ones I am close enough to snap at
if my love fails.
They are the ones I can make some special food for dinner.
They are the ones I can help with homework.
You have more opportunities to love those
whose lives you are intertwined with.

"Love one another as I have loved you."
I think Jesus is presuming
that the lives of his disciples will be intertwined.

So how intertwined are our lives actually?
Eleanor organised a meal last year
where folk could get together and get to know one another better.
We have KYB and home groups
and the Op Shop has a great sense of community.
On the Thursday before Easter,
you are invited to join us for a Passover meal.

Lots of people from church do things with other church members.
And that's great.
It gives us the close proximity in our lives,
that will enable us to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

What's the advantage of that?
It could become quite tiresome being in one another's pockets.

Jesus tells us the advantage.
"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another."
It's not so much like the CMS keep cup.
Everyone who went to SUTS this year
got a keep cup with their registration.
So when you are drinking your coffee,
everyone will know you are a CMS supporter.
Or even less like getting around in the paraphernalia
of your favourite footy team.
Yes Tammi, everyone will know you are a Crows supporter
if you go around in an Adelaide jumper.
Yes Lane we do know that your favourite musician is Tom Petty.
But this is different.
People know you are Jesus' disciple if you do the things that Jesus did.
You don't need a tee shirt or a keep cup.
They recognise you because you look like him.
Jesus loved.
Jesus loved to the point of giving up his life.
When you love like that,
they won't need a keep cup to recognise you.
They will simply look at your life.
And the point is not so they can look at you and say,
"Isn't she great?
She's a disciple of Jesus."
The point is so they can look at you and say,
"Isn't Jesus great?
Look what kind of disciples he left behind."

An American astrophysicist called Michael Hart wrote a book.
100 most influential people in history.

Now I don't know how you judge most influential.

It seems pretty subjective.

But you would think that Jesus ought to be number 1.

I mean, even for the non believer,

it should be obvious that Jesus changed the course of history
more than anyone else.

Well according to Hart,

Jesus ranks behind Muhammed and Isaac Newton
and just in front of Buddha.

Hart gives his reasons for ranking Jesus as less influential.

There are a few reasons and some of them are wrong.

But one thing is interesting.

If Jesus' followers copied Jesus' life

the same way Muhammed's followers copied his life,

then Hart would have no hesitation in calling Jesus the most influential.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another."

Have a look around.

These are the people God wants you to love.

How are you going to love these people?

Let's pray that we might love as Jesus has loved us.