

**“Jesus’ New Command: Love One Another”**  
(John 13:31-35 – Easter 5 – May 18, 2025)

John 13:31-35 – <sup>31</sup>So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. <sup>32</sup>If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. <sup>33</sup>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. <sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us:

Jesus says: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.” What is new about this commandment? Hadn’t God already commanded this fifteen centuries earlier through Moses: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18)? So what does Jesus mean when He says: “A new commandment I give you”?

Let us illustrate. A master gave his servant commands and duties every day. At first, the servant thought his master was too demanding. He obeyed grudgingly, as long as the master was watching; otherwise, he shirked his duty. But one day, all this changed. Due to his negligence, the servant caused a building to catch on fire, and he was caught inside, unconscious. Filled with compassion, the master rushed into the burning building and carried his servant out to safety; but in the process, the master was severely hurt. Later, when the servant found out what had happened, he saw his master in a whole new light. He was given the same commands and duties, but now he obeyed with joy and sincerity of heart. He was thankful for his master’s self-sacrificing love, and he looked for ways to demonstrate his gratitude.

In a similar way we can understand **“Jesus’ New Command: Love One Another.”** When we take to heart the love of our Lord and Master, who sacrificed His life to save us from sin, death, and hell, His command that we love one another takes on fresh meaning: **1) The motivation is new** and **2) The demonstration is new.**

**1) The motivation is new**

Even the command to love one another is ultimately a command to love God. We may think that the ways we show love to God are limited to the First Table of the Law, Commandments 1-3, which describe our relationship to God – by having no other gods before Him, by using His name rightly, by keeping His Word and worship holy. We might say, “I show love to God by going to church, giving offerings, praying, etc.” This is true, but how often do we consider that we show love to God just the same by keeping

the Second Table of the Law, Commandments 4-10, which describe how we are to love our neighbor – by honoring our parents and superiors, by protecting our neighbor’s life, by protecting the purity of marriage, by protecting what belongs to our neighbor, by protecting his good name, etc.? Yes, we show love to God, whom we cannot see, in the everyday ways He calls us to love and serve the people He puts around us.

This is part of the scriptural Doctrine of Vocation that says we serve and love God in every calling He gives us among people – as a husband or wife, parent or child, employer or employee, teacher or student, ruler or citizen, clergy or layperson... This is why, on the Last Day, heaven’s King will say: *“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”* (Matthew 25:40).

The danger is for us to stop with His command to *“love one another”* and forget the right motivation. Many portray Jesus merely as an example to follow. Their message is: *“What would Jesus do? Now you must do likewise.”* That is Law motivation, not Gospel motivation. It makes Jesus into just another lawgiver like Moses, come to load new burdens and obligations on us. Law motivation leaves us thinking: *“If I am ever going to get right with God, I have to work hard enough at trying to love others the way Jesus did.”*

But our sinful nature makes us like that grudging servant who thinks the master’s commands are too demanding. It says, *“What? You want me to love that person after all he has done to offend me? Why should I lower myself to serve that person?”* The attitude of our sinful nature corrupts every part of our lives. It is what causes husbands and wives to put their own selfish interests before each other’s needs. It is what causes parents to neglect children and children to dishonor parents. It is what causes us to perform our duties differently when we are watched than when we are not. It is what causes us to serve grudgingly with the thought: *“Look at what a sacrifice I’m making! I hope these people actually appreciate it.”*

Merely the command to *“love one another”* does not give right motivation to obey with joy. Rather, it provokes our sinful nature to rebel and leaves us dreading to meet our Master. For we know our service has fallen short of His Law’s demands; and that Law says we deserve the wages of sin in death and punishment (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

Thankfully, Jesus gives us new motivation to love. In our text, He does not speak as another lawgiver, come to put new burdens on us. He speaks as our Savior who came to fulfill the Law of love for us by His own service, and to remove our burden of sin by His own sacrifice. Here, Jesus was about to demonstrate the full extent of God’s love for us by laying down His life on the cross to take away our sins.

To get the full impact of His words, look at the context. It was the night before Jesus' death. He was in the upper room with His disciples. Judas had just gone out on his evil errand to betray Him. Yet listen to how Jesus speaks: *“Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.”*

Jesus saw glory in His work as the suffering Servant, who would soon die on the cross to save us from our sin! He had received this command from His Father, and in fulfilling it He would glorify His Father (John 10:17-18). Jesus did not consider it too demanding that His Father sent Him to serve us, after all we have done to offend Him. He considered it a joy to serve us and give His life as a ransom for us (Matthew 20:28).

Like the master illustrated earlier, in love Jesus rushed into the burning fire caused by our sin. We were helpless to save ourselves, but He suffered the hellish punishment to save us. He paid with His own life so He could rescue us and carry us out to safety. In raising His Son from the dead, God also glorified Him as our Savior. Truly, God is glorified in loving us so much that He gave His own Son to save us for eternal life!

Now we have new motivation for loving God and one another: *“We love Him because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). This is Gospel motivation. We love, not compelled by fear of judgment or because we must try to earn God's favor. We love as those who are set free from condemnation by Jesus' sacrifice, as those whom God has saved and loves for Jesus' sake. *“The love of Christ compels us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14). It is the motivation of that servant who now sees his Master in a new light, moved by His self-sacrificial love and generosity to serve with joy and sincerity of heart. It is the motivation that leads us to look for ways to demonstrate thankfulness to Him in the ways we serve one another.

## **2) The demonstration is new**

It is in this light that Jesus says: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”* The motivation is new, and the demonstration is new.

Jesus says: *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* We love because we are His disciples, not to become disciples. We love because we are God's children and heirs of eternal life in Christ. By God's grace, through faith in Jesus, we have been given all the riches of His Kingdom. We who have received God's love so generously are empowered by Him to share it. And Jesus says the world cannot but notice this fruit of faith in our lives – this fruit of love produced by His Holy Spirit in us.

This does not mean we are perfect. But we know we are forgiven and loved by God. We are like the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet, loving much because she had been forgiven much (Luke 7:47). We who have been forgiven much by our Savior are moved to share His love with others in ways the world does not expect.

Think of ways we share Jesus' love with one another in our Christian fellowship. We share His love as we come together in worship. As we hear His Gospel that proclaims all our sins forgiven, we can turn and share that same generous forgiveness with one another; we can demonstrate it in deliberate acts of reconciliation and love. As we hear Jesus' promise that He gives us eternal life and He has gone ahead to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, we can share His Word of comfort and hope with each other. As the family of God in Christ, we are here for one another in good times and bad times, to encourage one another in the faith. As members of the Body of Christ, we are here to use the spiritual gifts and abilities He gives in loving service, to build one another up.

It is the love He moves us to share in the home, as husbands and wives, parents and children, share His Word of forgiveness and love with one another. His Gospel moves us to love and serve one another with a fresh spirit of peace and joy in Christ.

It is the love He moves us to share in our neighborhood, workplace, school, or wherever He calls us in our daily life – as He leads us to do work well done to His glory and for the good of others; as He leads us to pray for those in need and help them; and as He leads us to share His Gospel with sin-burdened souls. It is the love that says to our neighbor: "There is plenty more where that came from; for God loves you so much that He gave His Son to die for your sins and rise again to win eternal life for you."

In every vocation, not only does God call us to love and serve those around us. He gives us new motivation as joyful servants whom He has redeemed by the life His Son. Whom do people really see but Christ in us, and His love demonstrated in new ways? They see in our life the faith that says: "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.