

May 15, 2022

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church Pastor David Labuhn

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from the crucified and living Lord Jesus! Amen.

We are in the Season of Easter and for the past four weeks, we have been celebrating the resurrection of our victorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have repeatedly said, *"He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"* So, now on this Fifth Sunday in Easter, our Gospel reverts back to the Upper Room of Maundy Thursday. You may remember that Jesus washed His disciples' feet that night, He announced that one of the disciples would betray Him, and He was about to announce that Peter would deny Him not once, but three times.

Our reading today begins with the departure of Judas which will set in motion the entire sequence of events – the betrayal, arrest, trials, scourging, the walk up the hill to Calvary, the crucifixion, the death, the burial, and resurrection. This is a dark moment where our text begins, ***"When he (Judas) had gone out."***

We might expect that Jesus would speak about the evil of Judas or the awful consequences that will come from his actions or the bitter result for him personally which results in his suicide. But not so. Before Jesus leaves the Upper Room with His disciples to go to the Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus emphasized two things with His disciples. He focused on His mission and prepared His disciples for what was to come.

If you look at the actions words, the verbs that Jesus used in the reading, you will notice there are two that appear the most. One of those verbs is ***“glorify”*** which appears five times and the other is ***“love”*** which appears four times.

When Judas left, Jesus said, ***“Now is the Son of Man glorified...”*** Isn't that strange? Knowing what is about to happen, Jesus says this will bring glory. Glory is an old word really. We don't use it much. In most cases, the word glory means to give recognition to someone for what they have done or praise and admiration for something because of its value. We use it to describe our flag when we call it Old Glory. We use the word glory here in church a lot. We sing the Gloria in Excelsis which is Latin for *“glory in the highest.”* We sing, *“To God on high be glory.”* Before we read the Gospel, we say, *“Glory, to You, O Lord.”* In the Lord's Prayer, we say, *“For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory...”* We recognize God as being worthy of recognition and worthy of our admiration and praise for what He has done for us. And we all know what that was as we celebrate this Easter season.

Jesus was explaining to His disciples what that meant. He was going to die a cruel and humiliating death nailed to a cross, one of the most horrible instruments of torture and death conceived by the minds of man. But glory would be shown in His tortuous death.

Jesus knew that the dark drama of death would be to the glory of God. There was glory because this terrible death was the means through which we were saved from eternal death. The glory came from God who created this means of salvation. The glory was due to God because He had so

much love for us - His creatures - that He sent His only-begotten Son to be executed as the sacrifice for our sins. The willingness of God the Father to sacrifice His Son, and the willingness of Jesus to die in obedience to His Father were acts of love. God would receive glory and, in turn, would give Jesus glory because He acted in obedience to His Father. Both acted out of love for us. It does not seem reasonable or right that glory would come through such a horrible act, through such a horrible and cruel instrument of torture, the cross, but look at the great good that came of it. God had conceived that plan in the Garden of Eden and initiated it in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our God showed His love in the unbelievable sacrifice of Jesus, His Son, and Jesus showed His love when He gave Himself as the sacrifice for our salvation. His act of love for our salvation resulted in His resurrection and made possible ours. His act of selfless salvation resulted in His being honored by the Father by being taken to heaven, and that gives us the hope of heaven through our faith in their acts of love and mercy for us. Their actions deserve glory.

Jesus knew that He would be separated from His disciples by His death, and that, at this time, they could not be with His personal presence among them. Jesus would also be separated from His disciples when He ascended into heaven to sit in the seat of honor and glory at the right hand of the Father. In light of this, Jesus reassured His disciples that He would come back for them. And, in the meantime, Jesus gave them a new commandment. He directed them to love one another as He had loved them. In the same way, He was speaking to us, His modern-day disciples here today. Like His disciples of the 1st Century, we are awaiting Jesus' return, whether on the last day of

our temporal life or the Day of the Judgement. On one of those days, Jesus will bring us to be with Him just as He promised His disciples. But until that time, we too, are bound to obey the commandment that Jesus has given us. We are to love one another as He has loved us. We are to act in His stead and in His absence to love each other and those around us.

Note that Jesus called this a **“new commandment.”** It was not new in content. Love is the central point of the Ten Commandments. In the first table, the first three commandments direct us to love God. The second table, Commandments four through ten, directs us to love our neighbor as ourselves. God had always expected us to love our neighbors, but this commandment that Jesus gives is different. Jesus didn’t say love your neighbors **“as you love yourselves.”** Jesus said to love each other (His disciples) (each of us) as **“I have loved you.”** When He said to love as He loved us, and God the Father loved us, He meant we were to love with a sacrificial love. It is in this love that God the Father gave His cherished Son, Jesus into death. It is in this love that Jesus gave Himself completely – gave His life for us. Now, Jesus is commanding that we love each other in the same way that those sacrificial acts of love were shown. And He repeated Himself as recorded in John 15:12, saying, **“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. This is my commandment, that you love one another, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.”** He went on to say, **“Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for their friends.”** Jesus was pointing to the type of sacrificial love we need to show each other and those around us.

Now here is the kicker from Jesus. The old command given to His people of Israel had as its purpose to remain as God's covenant people – to obey the law. Do this and you will live as a member of God's people. Jesus gives a different purpose. He says, ***“By this (by showing love like Jesus) people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** Your sacrificial love will bring glory to God and identify you as one of His own.

Jesus was clear about who should get the glory when He said that God the Father was glorified by Jesus' suffering and dying for us. The Father, in turn, glorified His Son or being obedient to His Father and Jesus added that He would ***“glorify Him at once.”*** We see the proof of that when God the Father raised Jesus from the dead only three days after His sacrificial death, and later when He ascended into heaven.

On the night when He was betrayed, as Jesus was making provisions for His departure, He knew He would no longer be physically present with His disciples to show them His love. They needed to fill in that gap by loving one another, just as He would have loved them if He had been present with them. And just as Jesus was known for His great love, they, His disciples, and we, His Christian followers, are to do the same – to be known for our love for one another and those around us.

The word *“agapate”* is the word that is translated as *“love”* in our text today (and used four times). It is in the present subjunctive case which means it emphasizes that the disciples were to love one another with continuous action. The love that was to be shown was not *“a one and done action.”* This new commandment of Jesus was meant to

have a continuous, renewing effect on all who are touched by it. It is the mark (a sign) of Jesus and God our Father who shows a continuing and renewing effect by their love. Jesus says that this love is also the mark (or the sign) of every one of His disciples. All of us. We could say it is the hallmark of Jesus' disciples that we love one another as Jesus has loved us with a sacrificial love.

Jesus' words remind me of a song recorded in 2005 by the Christian rock group "The Jars." They were from Nashville, Tennessee, and the song was on their album Redemptive Songs. If you know it, join in with me:

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 our unity may one day be restored. And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

The Christian writer Tertullian wrote in the 2nd Century A.D., that the Romans described Christians when Christianity was still an illegal "sect," by these words: "See how they love one another!" See how they love one another. Love one another as I have loved you!

The marks of love were plain on the body of Jesus. He showed His disciples his wounded hands, feet, and side. Even in the glories of His risen body, the marks of Jesus' suffering and love were still plain. Our love for God and our neighbor may leave their marks on us too. When we give to the mission work of our church, bring food for the social ministry programs here at OSWLC, and tell others of Jesus in Sunday School, VBS, and Bible study – these are marks and signs of our faith. When we put the best construction on what our neighbor says or does, when we give a person

a second chance or a third, or even a fourth, we are showing the mark of Christian love. When we stop making cutting remarks or using gutter language, when we act a bit differently at work or school or with friends – a bit more open, caring, more accepting, more loving – especially of people who are different from us – then we are showing the effects of our faith. The marks of a Christian.

Is that how you are known today? Is that what people think of when they hear your name? Do they think or say you are a Christian? When others meet a follower of Jesus (you) or visit a church (this church), do they experience the sacrificial love of Jesus? Do they really, truly know we are Christians by our love? Does it appear that we love as Jesus commanded us - to show love to each other?

On this 5th Sunday in Easter, we return to the cross in which the glory of God was shown. His glory was made apparent in His love for us by giving Jesus the sacrifice for our sins. And Jesus was honored by the Father for showing sacrificial love for us and then receiving the honor of being raised from death.

As we await the return of Jesus, He has commanded us to bring God glory as He did in His love for us by loving one another just as He loved us and died for us. Love is from God, and our God is a God of love. It is not mere emotion or feeling or sentiment. Biblical love is not all hearts and flowers but actions and deeds. Love changes lives.

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 our unity may one day be restored.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Hear the words of Jesus today. Show His love, His sacrificial love, and let it be the mark of who you are as a disciple and believer in Jesus; as a Christian, a follower of Your Savior, Jesus. Show who You are in Christ and to the glory of God. Amen.