

The New Command

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the Gospel of John. As we come to hear the word of the Lord preached, we want to read John chapter 13.

! It was just before the Passover feast.

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

So, he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

[1 : 24] He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? And Jesus replied, You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

No, said Peter, you shall never wash my feet. And Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you have no part with me. Then Lord, Simon Peter replied, Not just my feet, but my hands and my head as well.

Jesus answered, A person who has had a bath means only to wash his feet. His whole body is clean, and you are clean, though not every one of you.

For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.

Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am.

[2 : 30] Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I've set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

I tell you the truth. No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Verse 33. My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I have told the Jews, so I tell you now where I am going, you cannot come.

A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

[3 : 41] Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me?

I tell you the truth. Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times. Let's hear God's word preached. Let's hear God's word preached. Well, a question, a question.

What is the greatest and surest mark of a real Christian? Real disciples, genuine followers of Jesus Christ.

Well, according to Jesus, it's love, isn't it? That they love one another as I have loved them. And it's by this love that all people will know that they are my disciples.

We're studying together four graces of the Christian life and we've come to love. Love the great giver. Love, by definition, is an impulse to give, to diffuse, to share with others.

[4 : 57] It's love's delight to enrich others. It's something we find in God himself and in his people. We find it in Christ and we find it in his disciples. Now, we've seen that this grace of love in a Christian flows in two directions.

It flows Godward. We love him because he first loved us. But it also flows manward to our neighbors, our fellow man, whoever they may be, to our enemies, those who have mistreated us.

And especially toward our brothers and sisters in the family of God. And that's become our focus last weekend, this morning again. Our love for one another in the body of Christ.

Now, John 13 takes us right into the upper room on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Our Lord is down to the last evening with his 12 disciples before his crucifixion.

And having spent three years with these men, he's now leaving them to return to his father. And so he's preparing them for what they are about to witness as they'll see him dying in weakness upon a cross and preparing them to carry on the work after he's gone.

[6 : 15] John, the disciple whom Jesus loved was there that night and he tells us firsthand what he saw.

And so in chapters 13 through 17, John gives us Jesus' last words spread over some five hours that evening.

And over 30 times we hear Jesus speak to them about love. Love. The dominant note that he continues to pound. And if we read this whole section in one sitting we can't miss that emphasis and importance on love.

Jesus makes that clear. We hear it first in chapter 13 and verses 34 and 35.

It's like a thunderclap that demands our attention where Jesus speaks of his new command and the mark of his disciples. Now we only have time this morning to treat his new command.

[7 : 23] Next week, Lord willing, we'll see the mark of his disciples. So my dear children, I'm leaving you very soon and I leave you with a new command.

Verse 34. A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you so you must love one another. Now, the command to love is not new at all.

As far back as Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 18, God had revealed to his people that they are commanded to love their neighbor as, love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, that's not new. It's, according to Jesus, the second greatest commandment and it's been there for a long time. But what is new is the pattern and example of love.

You notice that. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. So the Son of God, what has happened since Leviticus 19, 18?

[8 : 29] The Son of God, the eternal Son of God has come and has loved them with the very love that the Father has for him. And he was just hours away from the greatest demonstration of that love as he would lay down his life for them.

So, God's love enfleshed in Jesus Christ made this old commandment new. It filled it with fresh meaning, fresh depth, fresh clarity.

Never had love been so clearly seen. And this love of Jesus for his own becomes the new standard of love.

not love your neighbor as you love yourself, but love one another as I have loved you. A new command.

So, if I would know how to love you, I must know how he has loved me. So, that's what we're looking at this morning. How has Christ loved us?

[9 : 33] Three distinctive marks of Christ's love for us. And just remember, as we're studying his love for us, we are also studying how our love must behave toward one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. So, first of the three, and perhaps there's no real order, but this is the order we'll take them in.

His love for us is undeserved love. Will anyone disagree with me on that point? Did he love you because you were so lovely and you deserved his love?

You were so holy and worthy of it. No. No. His love for us is undeserved. It's gracious. It's free. We didn't earn it.

Christ didn't wait to love us until we loved him. until we obeyed him. Until we were worthy of it. If he had, he would have waited forever and never would have loved us.

[10 : 43] Rather, it was precisely while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us in love. It was while we were yet enemies and sinful rebellion and God haters.

while we were grossly unthankful to him for his many gifts to us in creation. His many blessings while we were turned with our backs toward him.

That's when he loved us and gave himself for us. We deserved only wrath and he gave us love instead.

Now that's just the heart of the gospel, isn't it? And to go wrong on the gospel is to go wrong on love. Indeed, most of our problems loving one another have their roots in gospel distortions, gospel forgetfulness, being underwhelmed with this love that Christ has for us and has expressed for us at Calvary.

He loved me when I had no love for him. He loved me when I was sinning against him, full throttle against him. It was undeserved love.

[12 : 04] And if only I could say that all my injuries of Christ were before I knew him in my B.C. life, before he saved me. But the truth is I still sin against him.

And he is still wounded in the house of his friends. Now it's one thing to be wounded by your enemies. Oh, but it's another thing to be wounded by your friends.

That's a greater pain. And yet, he still loves me. Undeserving, ill-deserving as I am.

Did you stop sinning altogether when you became a Christian? Is that it? You drew a line, no more am I going to sin against Jesus? Do you never wound him still?

So what, has he quit loving you? No, because his love doesn't depend upon our deserving it. It never did, it never will. That's the beauty of it. We've sinned against this love of his time without numbers.

[13 : 10] others. Though for good, though for good, we render ill, he accounts us brethren still. Loves us, undeserving as we are.

Now notice how John introduces this whole evening at the beginning of John chapter 13. You see it there. He's writing much later. He's looking back on this night in the upper room.

And this is how he's going to introduce these next five chapters. John 13, 1. It was just before Passover feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the end. Or he now showed them the full extent of his love. Do you see how Jesus divides the disciples' experience, or how John, I should say, how John divides the disciples' experience of Jesus into two time categories.

There is the past three years and there is the next 18 hours that is about to unfold. It's kind of like a scrapbook with part one and part two. So part one, as John reviews all the events of the past three years that they had with Jesus, the one thing that stood out to John was that Jesus had loved them.

[14 : 36] You see it? Having loved his own who were in the world. Now love is patient and love is kind.

Love is long-suffering. And that's what Jesus was with them. Patient, kind, long-suffering. Some of you have gone camping for a week with a bunch of guys or even less than a week.

And you live in tight quarters without all the comforts of home. You try to sleep on the ground so you're sleep-deprived and not in your best and then it rains on you and you're splashing mud on each other and dragging mud into the tent and after a week of it you're glad to get home to your wives and to a warm shower and to real food.

Well, under such challenging circumstances, it's easy to get under the skin of each other, isn't it? It's easy to get irritated and impatient with each other.

Now maybe none of you men did that. You were able to keep a lid on it for a week but you know what I'm talking about, don't you? Then, can you men imagine what it was like for Jesus to be traveling and camping with 12 men, not for a week but for three years.

[16 : 05] That was Jesus in the 12th. And with these men, with all their differences and foibles and sins, Peter's mouth and James and John weren't called the sons of thunder for no reason, Jesus endured their lightning storms.

It wasn't always pretty and we get glimpses and peeks into that in the Gospels, don't we? What Jesus had to put up with for those three years that he was with his own.

Love is patient. Love suffers long. It is forbearing. It is forgiving. It overlooks offenses. And that was Jesus day in and day out for three years camping.

Their sins against him. Their sins against one another. their arguing with each other. Quick tongues, foolish words. Their repeated unbelief and lack of faith in Jesus.

Their dullness and slowness to believe all that the Scriptures had said. Their quickness to forget what Jesus had just taught them. Requiring him to teach them all over again. Their repeated misunderstandings of what he said due to their earthly preconceived ideas and cherished notions about the kingdom of God.

[17 : 23] and the Messiah's mission and what it would be. Their stubborn pride and self-righteousness. Their slowness to forgive. Their prejudice and lack of love for the Samaritans and the Gentiles.

Their having no time for little children and their parents bringing them to Jesus. There would be more than enough in all of that to make the very best among us to grow weary, loving.

John, writing much later now, looks back over all this time, these three years that these men had with Jesus and he just says, oh, how he loved us.

Having loved those, his own, who were in the world. Well, the second part of the scrapbook is John looking ahead to the next 18 hours to unfold and what John says is having loved them, he now loved them to the end or to the uttermost.

He showed them the utmost of his love. In other words, his love didn't peter out at the end but rather hid a new gear and showed them the utmost of his love.

[18 : 42] Think of the injuries that Jesus would yet suffer from these men over the next 12 hours. Peter will more than once say, nope, not going to happen, Lord, never, arguing with Jesus, telling Jesus how it will be.

They would grieve him with the same stubborn pride and self-righteousness as they argue with each other on that last night about who of them was the greatest. They will all make promises that they will then break within hours.

they will all sleep when he most needs and wants their prayers and sympathy in his sorrow and deep distress that nearly killed him in Gethsemane and he will say, stay here and watch and pray with me and he will go on a little farther and he'll come back and he'll find them sleeping.

Could you not watch and pray with me one hour and he'll go off again and he'll come back and find them sleeping and again and again three times they don't care enough about me to pray with me to stay with me in this my darkest hour yet.

They'll all forsake him at his arrest they'll all leave him all alone to face the worst and Peter will go on to disown him and just to deny that he even knows him three times. Now those are no small failures of love and they're all packed together from Jesus' own disciples into this last twelve hours that is now to be unfolded and John looks back at that and he says oh how he loved us oh but how he now showed us the full extent of his love not allowing any of those offenses of ours to him to in any way cool or chill his love to us but rather going straight to the cross to be damned and die for us that's what we saw just more not less love and then we think of the pitiful things that dry up our love for one another brother an unkind word an angry look some unfair treatment and our love for one another shrivels and chills into a cold civility and politeness if not ripened into bitterness molehills compared to what we each have done to our savior thousands of times yet he only doubles down on love for us the more we wound him in the house of his friends the more he pities and loves us thou hast the pure and perfect gentleness indeed gentle and lowly of heart and because his love doesn't depend upon our earning our good behavior because it's free it's gracious love for the undeserving and that is the love that we're commanded now to give to one another undeserved love in fact the more undeserved by the other the more

[22 : 06] Christ-like your love is so when a brother or sister in Christ mistreats you in some way you are just then in the situation where you have the opportunity to obey Jesus new command to love one another as he has loved you a love for the undeserving oh but they said this oh but they did that and Jesus says okay all you've told me is that they don't deserve your love what's that got to do with anything the love I'm commanding you to show is the love I've showed you I've commanded you to love undeserving them as I have loved undeserving you now get at it remember that the next time you think you have reason for your love to cool toward a brother or sister could we bear from one another what he daily bears from us yet our glorious friend and brother loves us though we treat him thus well

Christ like love doesn't feed off of the one that we're loving my love for my brother is not to doesn't draw strength from their treatment of me no it draws from the Lord Jesus and his love for me well if Christ has loved us with an undeserving love the the unescapable conclusion is that nobody but nobody and especially our brothers and sisters in the family of God has to deserve love before they get it from us it's undeserved love secondly Christ has loved us with a costly love a costly love we sang it I cling to Christ and marvel at the cost his love was costly love wasn't it now love's the great giver but will you not agree that there is giving and then there is giving that there is a giving that costs us nothing and then there is a giving that does cost us a giving that doesn't hurt and a giving till we hurt that was

Christ's love he gave and he gave until it hurt until it cost there was nothing cheap about his love you see love gives to to meet the needs of the loved one that's what love is it delights to meet the needs of its object and our need was so great and our sin had sunk us so low that if the son of God was going to really love us and meet our deepest need which is to be right with God reconciled to God well then it would cost him dearly no it would cost him everything and he was so loving toward us that he was willing to pay that price we had a hell to pay for our sin debt against God infinite wrath forever and Jesus says I'll pay it I'll pay it so in love he became man for us and in love he became sin for us and in love he became accursed for us that he might redeem us to

God God made him who had no sin to be sin for us and he himself bore our sins in his body to the tree and there on the cross he was cursed and punished for us he was wounded for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities and the punishment that brought us peace with God was upon him and by his wounds we are healed it was damnation and he took it willingly Jesus paid it all and whenever the Bible talks about Christ redeeming love it inevitably leads us to the cross to the cross like Ephesians 5 2 Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God he was the sacrifice on the altar of the middle cross at

Calvary that's what loving us cost him to save us the hellish cross where he was sacrificed in our place we sang it recently if not last week this is the power of the cross son of God slain for us what a love what a cost we stand forgiven at the cross because there he became sin for us took the blame bore the wrath yes we're forgiven all but at what a cost God gave himself up for us in Jesus Christ there was nothing more for him to give once he had given up himself as the sacrifice on the cross costly self sacrificing love and now he says as I have loved you you must love one another Paul trip looks at this love and he calls it cruciform love because

[27 : 53] Christ's love bears the imprint of the cross you can't talk about Christ's love without getting to the cross cruciform love and that's the kind of love that Jesus commands us to have toward our brother and sister love that's willing to be sacrificed love that's willing to die to self in order to enrich another and it can pay that cost in different ways sacrificing some money some time some spiritual gifts or even just some discomfort of what it is to go on loving someone who's misunderstanding and mistreating you you know there's a cost to pay for not getting even isn't there you know what I mean there's nothing like sweet revenge and somebody says something and just giving it right back oh that's good that feels good doesn't it but love will pay the cost to return evil with good it costs something it hurts to not have the last word in a disagreement to be ready to just walk away with a pleasant look without having had the last jab to let their words be the last word to the discussion that hurts love each other with costly love love that does hurt love that does cost you something now when we turn to 1st John

I want you to turn to chapter 3 of 1st John I want you to see notice something with me in the way the apostle John handles this matter of loving one another as Christ has loved us in these passages actually we're in chapter 3 verse 16 of 1st John we're right in the midst of a section called loving one another and what I want you to notice is that where John clearly speaks of Christ's own love for us he no sooner speaks of Christ's love for us than he turns around and says now you love each other like he's loved you it's almost like he can't talk about Jesus love for us without remembering that upper night upper room evening with Jesus when he said now you all as I have loved you you must love one another so here we are 1st John chapter 3 and verse 16 this is how we know what love is we're talking about loving one another what is that what does it mean how do we love one another well this is how we know what love is

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us not period full stop end of discussion and we ought to lay down our lives for us do you hear the echo from the new command Jesus laid down his life for us that's how you're to love you must!

love one another and so we too must we ought to lay down our lives for one another so our love must be patterned after his love did Jesus lay down his life for us then we must lay down our lives for our brothers was his love costly well then ours must not shrink from the cost either now we by laying down our lives even if we could go to the nth degree of giving up our physical life cannot redeem our brothers and sisters like Jesus loved did but there is a way for us to lay down our lives for our brothers and he shows us how we do that verse 17 the next verse if anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him how can the love of God be in him and the answer is it can't it can't be in him not at that moment because God's love by very definition gives shares diffuses to others love takes delight in the relief of our brother in need oh but that will require a costly sacrificial giving and what verse 16 calls laying down our lives for our brothers that's a sacrifice of our life verse 17 says

God's love in us will pay the cost of material possessions to me the brother's need do you see those two together can you can you see how how verse 17 is a fulfillment of verse 16 that the verse 17 is how we lay down our lives for one another have you thought how your financial gifts really are laying down your lives for the person in need think of it this way let's assume you work 40 hours a week what is your paycheck your paycheck represents your 40 hours of your life right that's what that paycheck is it's just a representative thing that represents what 40 years not 40 years 40 hours of your life now you only have so much of your life to live and when you take some of that paycheck and give it to meet somebody else's life others need you've just given something of your life to them an hour two hours three four five twenty hours of your life you've just given it away you've laid it down you sacrificed!

[33 : 45] you've gone without that they might have that they might have their needs met and it requires sacrifice doesn't it?

Sacrificing the pleasure the enjoyment legitimate pleasure enjoyment that you would have had from that portion of your earnings in order to enrich another that's sacrifice that's laying down your life for another according to John 3 16 and 17 and of course the same thing is true of any time that you invest in your brother or sister in dozens of different ways from just drawing aside and praying for them for five minutes in calling them visiting them helping them in some way you are giving a portion of your life laying it down sacrificing for what John is after is a love that's more than talk you see it in verse 18 what follows dear children let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth talk is cheap be warmed and filled doesn't cost you anything to say that just a breath but actions are costly in time in money a very part of your life is given lay down for another

Jesus didn't just love us in word from his splendor in heaven I love you guys down there I love you he saw me plunged in deep distress he flew to my relief for me he bore!

he bore the shameful cross and carried all my grief that's more than words that's actions that's truth he loved us with actions and truth costly actions and the flesh complains about that cost you know I have things that I need to buy with that money and I already had that extra time assigned for something that I wanted to do in my schedule of course you do and that's exactly what Christ like love is willing to sacrifice for the greater joy of seeing your brother or sister enriched there was nothing cheap about Jesus love for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich forever how rich I am since Jesus came my way redeem my soul change my night today and now he says as I have loved you so you must love one another a love like mine a love willing to pay the cost and to keep paying the cost and should you ever think that your love for your brother or sister is costing you too dearly well you just need to bring your complaint to the service department of heaven they have an office over in

Jerusalem it's right outside the city gates it's on the knob of a hill called the skull the man you'll want to talk to is on the center cross dying between two thieves his face is streaked with blood from a crown of thorns that's been beaten into his head by a staff and his face is puffy and beyond human recognition where he was beaten and his beard plucked out and he's hanging there on three nails one through each hand and one through both feet and when the weight of his body pulls him down it nearly suffocates him and when he can't go on without getting a breath he has to push up on that nail through his feet to get up high enough to expand his chest and breathe and as he pushes up that back that has been bloodied by the cat-o'-nine whips scrapes across that old rugged cross and he heaves and gets another breath until the pain in his feet is so bad he can't take it anymore and he slumps down and now he's hanging again on those nails through his hands and his chest is compressing and they can't take it he has to push up again to get another breath and so it goes for hours in the heat of the sun with the flies and with the crowd mocking and scorning and laughing at him and the worst of it has not even started yet no it wasn't until noon three hours in when the sky suddenly grew dark and the father hid his face from him and he's all alone and forsaken and during that darkness that three hours of darkness the father poured his almighty infinite wrath concentrated into those three hours upon his son we never hear him scream because of the physical pain but whatever that wrath of God did to his soul caused him to say my God my God why have you forsaken me and so if somehow between his cry of dereliction and his giving up his spirit to his father you could take your complaint to him and tell him how it's costing you too much to go on loving your brother or sister he'll hear you but at this scene we forget why we came and we just say oh Lord

[39 : 58] Jesus teach me to love like you have loved me John was there that day he stood at the foot of the cross he saw it and he couldn't think of it without also hearing what he had just said a few hours earlier in the upper room men I'm leaving you and I'm leaving you with a new commandment that you love one another as I have loved you you must love one another and so Paul or John can talk about this is what love is Jesus Christ laying down his life but he right away says and we ought to lay down our lives for one another you see the cross forever defined love for John and he's a man possessed now he's a man uncompelled like the apostle Paul by the love of Christ to now love his brethren and to stir them up and that's why to his very last day he was saying my little children love one another because if you've done that you've done all

John does the same thing in chapter 4 and verses 9 through 11 the next chapter this is how God showed his love for us he sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him this is love not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice a propitiation to pacify the wrath of God by taking it for ourselves so dear friends since God so loved us we ought to love one another you see it's the echo he can't tell us about how Jesus loved us without saying no since he loved us that way we need to love one another the cost can be great and that's why we pray Jesus keep me near the cross near the cross well his love for us was undeserved it was costly and lastly and very briefly it was unending it was unending it was infinite it was eternal it was unchangeable having loved his own who were in the world he now showed them the full extent of his love or he now loved them to the end and we know what's coming in these last 12 hours and all the offenses of his disciples against him and none of that will cool his love he will just go on loving them right to the cross and he'll stay on that cross and what's holding him there is not so much the nails as it is his love and he will be held!

by love until he can say it is finished I love you so much I'm paying the full price the transaction is done you're forgiven all your sins it is finished it was love to the end and as I have loved you so you must love one another with an unending love that's the only kind of divine love there is 1 Corinthians chapter 13 love never fails it just keeps going on and on it endures all things it's never extinguished it always perseveres and that's the hallmark of Christ's love for his own nothing can separate us from this love it's a love that will not let you go and that's the distinctive!

mark of Christians love to each other it's to never end in the Greek it's a present tense in Jesus word that where he says as I have loved you so you must keep on loving one another a present continuous tense to show that our love for each other isn't just shown in a one time action his really came to flower in one action on the cross he doesn't use the present continuous!

but he does when he says now you keep on loving one another it's no easy thing to keep on loving is it when that love is not being repaid proverbs 20 verse 6 many a man claims to have unfailing love but a faithful man who can find who can find well where are we going to get such love that's the question where are we going to find love that is undeserved the more you pile of wrong to me the more I love you back where am I going to get love that's willing to pay the price of laying down my life for you and where am I going to get this love that never dies it just keeps going on and on the buckets of water just extinguish my love just keep coming on but the flame keeps burning hotter and hotter where am

[45 : 07] I going to get that love well it's clear isn't it it's not from me I'm going to have to get it from him I'm going to have to get it from the vine I'm going to have to get it as a dry old empty branch and by union and communion with Christ receive such love through this fruitful vine that I might love you as he loves me it's his love in us and we'll look more at that next week that's the only way that we can love this way so let's pray and let's plan to love as Jesus loved this week who will be on the receiving end of that kind of love in your life give some thought to it Jesus did and he came and he fulfilled that plan and if you're here and you don't know

Jesus I'm going to challenge you this morning to surrender to this love to believe that there is such a love in the universe that the God of the universe the God who made you and saw you turn your back on him and go your own way and film him he came in the person of his son so great his love and he now offers you that love will you receive it by faith will you come and take it will you say yes Lord I believe because there's no safer place for your life to be than in the hands of somebody that loves you that loves you like this you want to go your own go it on your own go on what are you going to find you going!

find! a world that's hating! and being hated you going to find the darkness in your own heart unable to love and to receive love but you come to Jesus and you find in him this perfect love and you begin to find out what you were made for to love him and to love your neighbor and to love one another even as Jesus has loved you let's pray teach us Lord Jesus to love each other like you have loved us and when we find ourselves cooling and cold in our love toward each other lead us to Calvary and teach us again and warm our hearts again that your love for us that that love might so take grip in our hearts that we would then be able to love as we ought hear us answer us show us your mighty power in Jesus name we pray!