

“Following Love’s Command”

Today is Maundy Thursday. The Maundy comes from the Latin word *mandatum* which translates as commandment. For this is the day we remember that in the Gospel of John Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment, “that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”¹

When Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us, he is not just telling us to be nice to one another. He is telling us to take care of each other.

To follow Jesus’ commandment is not easy. It is because commandments are not our norm. We have had the Ten Commandments for about four thousand years, but people continue to murder, covet, lie, cheat on their spouse, and take the Lord’s name in vain. What we are asked to do in the Ten Commandments or Jesus’ newer commandment requires us to change our life.

When Jesus commands us to love one another, he is telling us to turn our lives in a new direction. A direction where our lives become one ongoing act of love for others. A life of service for others. This does not mean that we become doormats or selfless martyrs. Rather, it is out of our gratitude for God’s love that we must serve one another just as Jesus served and set the example for his disciples. His love did not stop with the crucifixion, it is to be ongoing in them and in us.

It may be hard to imagine this kind of love and selflessness, especially for 21st-century Westerners. We are taught that the wealth of the world is ours for the taking. We are taught that whatever we want should be fulfilled instantly. If it is not, then we have been disrespected and deprived of our birthright. I know because I feel this way all too often. That does not mean that I and we cannot overcome that feeling and that sense of entitlement.

Indeed, one of the major criticisms of Christians is that we do not live by the commands of Jesus. We put down people who are different. We hoard money instead of sharing with the poor and disadvantaged. It is not just people outside of Christianity we hurt, we argue with each other, and call names. Sometimes we are worse to our fellow Christians than we are to atheists, agnostics, and followers of other religions. The truth is if we followed Jesus, we would love them all, just as he did.

Jesus gives the love commandment for the health of our souls and the world around us. We are to love to the extent that we will do the lowest of jobs, such as washing people’s dirty feet. When we can live in this way, we are truly living the *mandatum* of Maundy Thursday. As we do, we will find it becomes easier to do one more thing in love, and thus we keep growing in our service to others. We trade selfishness for selflessness.

Let us begin anew today to live into this love commandment so that, as Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, [because] you have love for one another.”

¹ John 13:35