**A New Command I Give You**

 John 13:31-38

 In John’s gospel chapter 13, we see that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. He also predicted Judas’ betrayal. After Judas’ departure, Jesus gave the disciples a new command: “Love One Another!” It was His last will to the disciples. It is God’s will for His people that we Love One Another. The cross of Jesus is the symbol of Christianity. The vertical part symbolizes our love towards God and the horizontal part symbolizes our love toward each other. Yet, we often fail to live a life of love. Instead of loving each other, we hurt each other. When we want to live a life of love, we face a great dilemma: “To be (love) or not to be (love) that is the question.” How then can we fulfill Jesus’ new command in our church?

**1. Follow Jesus’ example of sacrifice (31-33)**

When Judas 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” (31-32). Judas went away to hand Jesus over to the chief priests. It meant that Jesus would soon be arrested and that He would face His death. So Jesus said, “My children, I will be with you only a little 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” (33). Humanly speaking, it was the time of His despair and reproach. Yet Jesus saw it as the time of glory. So we see the word “glory” repeated 5 times in verses 31-32. His heart was filled with the hope of God’s glory. Jesus said earlier, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (Jn 12:23-24). Jesus’ death was Him becoming God’s instrument for the salvation of many people. He rejoiced because many would receive life through His death. Sacrificing for others is a high dimensional love – agape love. The love in this world is selfish and self-centered. One woman sent a letter to an old boyfriend, “I realized over the times that I truly truly love you. I sincerely desire to restore our love. I love you. I love you.” And there was a postscript: “Congratulations on winning the lottery.” Yet Jesus loved us unconditionally and sacrificially. When we sacrifice ourselves, following Jesus’ example, many receive life through us and God is glorified. Jesus is our role model, showing us how to live a life of love. Living a selfish life is ugly, but sacrificing our lives for others is the life of glory.

**2. Obey the new command of Jesus (34-35)**

Jesus says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (34). We are selfish and conditional. So we love those who are lovely. We can’t love those who are different from us. We can’t embrace those who hurt us. In conclusion, with our love, we can’t love even one person. If you want to love someone who is exactly like you, you should stay in front of a mirror and love the person in it. Jesus’ love is our foundation for a life of love. 1 John 4:7-8 tell us, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love is of God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” We don’t have love within us. It belongs to God. A mirror can’t shine light but it reflects light. The same is true. We can’t shine the light of love on our own. Only when we have Jesus and His love can we live a life of love; we reflect Jesus’ love. So, we must be filled with His love.

Loving one another is not Jesus’ suggestion or advice but His command. So it is not an optional thing. It should be obeyed. To what degree, should we obey it? God’s command in the OT says, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Lev 19:18). In the OT, it is commanded to love your neighbor as yourself. The new command is to love one another to the point of sacrificing our life as Jesus had done. In obeying the new command, we love, bless and even sacrifice ourselves for even those who hurt our feelings. In a sense, it is easy to love someone far away. Yet it is not easy to love someone who is close to you because we may hurt each other. We often disappointed with each other and even despise one another. Jesus wants us to start obeying His command with someone that is close. Why? Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (35). The mark of being Jesus’ disciple is love. When we love one another, we show Jesus in us to the world. And our love spreads like the waves of the sea. The world will see Jesus through us. Who then should start to live such a life of love? It is not someone else but I. We should go to a person whom we don’t want to talk to and show our love. Don’t say, “I really hated and despised you. I now repent and will love you.” Just love that person. How can you do it? Remember Jesus’ cross. Who crucified Jesus? Was it Roman soldiers or the chief priests? It is actually you and I. Because of our sins, He was nailed to the cross. He could have come down and saved Himself. Yet He hung there to save you and me. We’ve received such wonderful love. How can we hate anybody due to their faults and small mistakes? Love one another as Jesus unconditionally loved us.

**3. Pray for those who hurt you (36-38)**

At that time, Simon Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later” (36). Jesus was saying that Peter will not be able to join Him on His cross. Being overconfident about his love for Jesus, Peter said, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you” (37). Peter was saying, “Jesus, you don’t know me. I will be faithful even to the point of death.” Jesus said to Peter, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!” (38). Jesus didn’t rebuke Peter, who would later deny Him three times. He helped Peter to know how weak he is. In Luke 31-32, we see more of Jesus’ heart for Peter: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Sifting wheat is throwing harvested wheat in the air so that the wheat can be separated from the chaff. In the time of Jesus’ passion, Peter would be blown (fall) away like chaff. In fact, he fell, denying Jesus three times. On the third denial, he even called down a curse. Jesus could have been angry with Peter. Yet He prayed for his faith and restoration. He put His hope in Peter to be restored and changed and be a blessing for many others. Through Jesus’ blessing and prayer, Peter was able to repent and he was restored. When he preached on the Pentecost, 3,000 people were converted. Let us see others with the eyes of Jesus. Let us bear with one another in prayer and bless them so that they may be changed. In a sense, we see Peter in ourselves. Didn’t we confess to Jesus that we will love Him with all our heart? Didn’t we say that we would lay down our life for Jesus? Didn’t we say that we would serve Jesus and His flock? But we loved the world. We took care of our own self. We tried to avoid the place of service. Jesus prayed for us; He bore all of our weaknesses. Thus, we are who we are today. So instead of despairing with our weak brothers or sisters, we should pray, blessing them.

What is Jesus’ desire for our church? We can do many things such as reaching our community, doing disaster relief diligently or even get involved in global missions. The most fundamental thing is obeying Jesus’ New Command: “Love One Another!” When we pray and obey Jesus’ command, remembering and following Jesus’ sacrifice, Jesus will abide with us. His Holy Spirit will pour God’s love into our heart (Ro 5:5). We will be a church that is filled with Jesus’ love so that we reach our community powerfully. Hallelujah!