

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church  
Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2006

Sermon: *Mandatum Novum Do Vobis (Maundy)*

Lectionary

Exodus 12.1-14a

Psalm 78.14-20, 23-25

I Corinthians 11.23-26 (27-32)

John 13.1-15 or Luke 22.14-30

Additional Scripture: Gospel: John 13.1-15, 31-35;  
John 15.1-14; I John 4.1-11

Joh 13:34 mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut  
dilexi vos ut et vos diligatis invicem<sup>1</sup>

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Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

I am sure no one here has ever heard said, and much less said, "I forgive them! BUT I won't forget what they have done."

Around twenty years ago, I was in a class where a meditation was led. We were invited in our meditation to go to any store that we wanted. Then we were asked to choose a value, not a thing, but a value to take with us from the store.

When it came time to share our experiences, it seemed the Lord let everyone go to Wal-Mart or some place like that. But, no, not me. He took me to a Cokesbury Bookstore (UMC) where there were nothing but red leathered Bibles with golden edges, row after row as I walked up and down the aisles. Then I saw an altar with one of the Bibles opened to Galatians 5.22-23. There was the golden cross and the candles on either side of it.

When we were told to make our selection, I found myself lifting (with cupped hands) Galatians 5.22-23 from the Bible that was open. I went to the front of the store to pay for what I had selected. When I got to the front of the store, there was no cash register. I stood with my hands cupped,

holding the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

I wept as I realized the cost to have the fruit of the Spirit in my life. I must forgive all who have hurt me, all who are presently hurting me, and all who will – with the love of Jesus flowing through me to them with great and overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit guiding that love as it flows.

I'm a slow learner sometimes. I don't seem to understand with the heart, or perhaps I am just disobedient and rebellious – as the Lord showed me a glass of water and told me to pick it up. I could do that easily enough. So, I picked up the glass filled with water. Then the Lord said, Now drop the glass.

My response was, but it is full of water, and I'll not be able to direct where the water . . . go – e – s – when – the – glass - breaks. The Lord said, You got the point. Too long you have been conduit and decided where my love goes and to whom. I say to you, Love one another, as I have loved you.

This passage was given directly to His disciples. It was a new commandment in that it was given specifically to His followers, but given after He had shown them love, had shown them **ἀγάπη** – the love described in John 15.13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Let's look at how many times this New Commandment is either addressed or repeated: John 13.34-35; 15.12; Ephesians 5.2; I Thessalonians 4.9; James 2.8; I Peter 1.22; I John 2.8-11; 3.11, 23; 4.7, 21.

This commandment is the same as in Deuteronomy 6, Leviticus 19 and also Mark 12. We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, our might, our soul – our whole being. It is a way of life – when we lie down, when we rise, when we are out in the community and at work, and when we are at home.

But Jesus came and showed us – no, not an example, but gave Himself for us. That is love, and that is the love with which we are to love one another. Notice that Jesus does not say in John's Gospel, Now I have given you an example, go do it. Jesus says in verse 34, "As I have loved you, ye also are to love one another." You cannot give what you do not have. If the love of Jesus is not in you, you cannot give or share His love. You and I cannot love others if we do not love Jesus. We cannot love others if we have not opened our hearts, our lives to receive His love given to us on the Cross of Calvary.

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<sup>1</sup> Vulgate – e-sword program

You see there is the anti-Christ, those who do not know the Father and the Son.

I John 2.18-23 tells us very clearly that

1Jo 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

1Jo 2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *[(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also].*

We know the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Scripture says “Greater is He that is within you than he that is in the world” (I John 4.4). Because we know the Son of God, we have power to love. We are empowered to love one another, to walk in obedience to the New Commandment given to us by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

When we go to the reverse side of the cross and see with the heart of God in Christ Jesus, His only begotten son, by the Holy Spirit, we will begin to weep for the people who hurt us. We will have a burden for them, the pain in their lives that cause them to treat us in a way that hurts. But, it will also cause us to weep because of our own sinfulness. It will be then that we will experience the glory of the Lord God Almighty, and in experiencing His glory, we will see that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Is 64.6).

Colossians 3.12-17 says that we are to “forgive one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (v 13). Love one another is to forgive one another. (Ephesians 4)

Isaiah hears the seraphims crying out,

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”

Isaiah in the presence of the Holy One, the Lord God Almighty, says,

“Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. . . .(Isa 6.1-6).

Oh, how the world and the brethren, each of us need to experience this forgiveness that comes from the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross of Calvary. He died for your sins and for my sins, for the sin of the world. We have not experienced forgiveness at the Cross of Calvary – if we have not experienced forgiveness for the worst of sinners, for our enemies, for

those who hurt us. “The Love of God” brings forgiveness for you and for me and for all who repent of their sins.

Christ’s love for all of us is

- 1) unchangeable (Jn 13.1),
- 2) Divine (Jn 15.9),
- 3) Self-sacrificing (Jn 15.13),
- 4) Inseparable (Ro 8.35),
- 5) Constraining (Impelling) (II Cor 5.14),
- 6) Sacrificial (Ga 2.20), and
- 7) Manifested by his Death (I Jn 3.1).

Oh! “The Love of God” (**ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ**)<sup>2</sup>!

The early Church Fathers understood this. St. Polycarp goes to his death for Jesus, praying for those who betrayed him, those of his own household. St. Ignatius of Antioch goes to his death for Jesus Christ, praying for those who are seeking his life and even writes seven churches to encourage them in these days.

Oh, Jesus says, “As I have loved you, ye also are to love one another.” This command to love one another is to fulfill all the commandments, Matthew 28.19-20 and all that are in the Holy Bible.

When we can catch a glimpse of His glory, we realize all the pettiness on this earth, the need for power, control, money . . . that causes great pain in the world, in Christ’s Holy Church, even in our families is but a distraction to that to which we are called: “Love one another, says Jesus, as I have loved you. Forgive one another, says Jesus, as I forgave you.” When we catch a glimpse of His glory, we will realize that our need for power, to succeed in the world, is vanity – and brings death.

Jesus set the standard for us – on the Cross of Calvary. It was Watchman Nee<sup>3</sup> who was martyred for Jesus Christ in the 30’s who ask,

Is it right for someone to strike you on the cheek? No. But our standard is not what is right or wrong, justice or injustice. As Christians, our standard is the Cross of Christ, “The Love of God.”

Philippians 2.5-8 paints the picture well of the Love of God.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

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<sup>2</sup> Greek NT from e-sword program

<sup>3</sup> Watchman Nee, *Sit, Stand, Walk*

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:  
And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

I am reminded of a powerful hymn.

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,  
God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

*Refrain*

*O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song.*

Frederick M. Lehman

The Eucharist, the Great Thanksgiving, celebrates

- 1) The *real* presence of Jesus Christ, His love for us through His shed blood on the Cross of Calvary,
- 2) Forgiveness for sinners – and I, for one, stand in need.
- 3) Unity in the family of God, and
- 4) A foretaste of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

As we hear said, “Next year in Jerusalem,” Let us joy in the feast to come as we come to the table of the Lord to receive Jesus, healing, forgiveness, and His love.

*Sing:*

He said, freely, freely you have received.  
Freely, freely, give.  
Go in my name and because you believe,  
Others will know that I live.

Carol Owens, Mt 28.19-20

Amen.

*Note: Monday, April 17, 2006, when I went to the church, Cathy Ross asked me to sign a book saying, You preached the Maundy Thursday service, so we need you to sign the registry of preachers.*

