

A new commandment

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[0 : 0 0] And now we'll read from John chapter 13, beginning at verse 18, and that's on page 1045 of the Bibles in the pews.

And of course, this is the Last Supper. Jesus has washed the disciples' feet, and now he goes on to speak to them. I am not referring to all of you. I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the scripture.

He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me. I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am he.

I tell you the truth. Whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth. One of you is going to betray me.

[1 : 1 2] His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, ask him which one he means. Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, Lord, who is it?

Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. What you are about to do, do quickly, Jesus told him. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out.

[2 : 2 1] And it was night. When he was gone, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man 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. 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. 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 : 2 4] 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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Hasta Gordon. We do pray, Lord Jesus, that as we come to your word now, as I proclaim it, that you would speak to us powerfully by your spirit, that you would lead us in what is true, and we pray, Father, that you would work amongst us, growing us in righteousness, that we might be the people of God and that we would reflect you in the way that we're meant to be.

And we pray this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Do you remember when we were best friends, when we'd share our every thought, every smile, every laugh?

[4 : 53] Oh, and did you remember when you broke my heart? Because I seem to remember that more than anything. I trusted you.

I trusted you to take care of my heart. I trusted you not to take it and stomp on it. And the day that you betrayed my trust was the day that I lost all my trust for you.

I believed that you would take care of my heart and that's why I left it with you. Well, I'm taking it back because at this very moment, I can't trust you with my heart in fear that you will hurt me once more.

Look at me through my eyes and feel the pain I hide inside. It breaks my heart. It makes me sad to think of all the times we had. You made me laugh.

You made me cry. And all that I can do is sigh and wonder why. I wish I could walk away and forget what we have, but I can't. Because I know you won't come after me and I guess that's what hurts the most.

[5 : 59] It's really amazing when two strangers become the best of friends, but it's really sad when the best of friends become two strangers. Trust can take years to build, but only a second to break.

How can it be that two of the greatest friends in the world can go from being each other's everything to absolutely nothing? The anguished heart of a young woman whose heart has been crushed by betrayal.

And that's a very, there's a very close relationship between love and betrayal. How many of us have experienced the bitterness of love gone wrong?

We've seen it in our parents or our children or amongst our friends. Love which has been smashed in a moment of betrayal, maybe even ours.

A heart crushed and anguished as someone makes their decision and walks away. Now we saw last week in John 13, I hope you got John 13 open because that's where I'm speaking from this morning.

[7 : 09] We saw last week in John 13 that the clock is ticking. There is less than 24 hours to the crucifixion of Jesus. He's spending his last day with his 12 chosen friends and he is preparing them for his departure.

And in verse 18, he stuns them by revealing that there is a traitor in their midst. I'm not referring to all of you. I know those that I have chosen, but this is to fulfill the scripture that he who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.

I tell you now before it happens so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I sense accepts me and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me. And his disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant.

Jesus has been hinting at this for a while back in chapter 6, verse 70. He said, Have I not chosen you, the 12, and yet one of you is a devil? And then earlier on in this chapter, in John chapter 13, Jesus said to the disciples, You are clean, though not every one of you.

[8 : 30] For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said, not everyone was clean. Now Jesus takes the words of Psalm 41 and makes them his own.

And so in Psalm 41, King David sees the Lord, he talks about the Lord being a Lord who will deliver him, and protect him, and preserve him, and bless him, and sustain him, and he's going to restore him in the face of a bunch of enemies who are looking to bring him down.

And the enemies say things about David, like, When will he die and his name perish? When will we be done with him? And they come to him in conversation, and they pretend to be interested, and he says, All that they're really doing is gathering slander in their hearts, and then going out and spreading it to anyone who will listen.

And in verse 9 he says, Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shed my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

And Jesus takes these words from the Old Testament, and he applies them to his situation. And I think it's reasonable to think that when Jesus quotes one verse from this psalm, he's actually got the whole meaning of the psalm in mind.

[9 : 47] The king is being plotted against from all directions. He's experiencing the agony of heart that comes from the betrayal of a close friend. And the psalm finishes with the confident assertion that my enemy does not triumph over me.

And John's gospel will soon show that the enemies of Jesus do not triumph over him. The disciples are stunned by what Jesus says.

Seems like nobody except Judas knows that betrayal's at hand. He's been very quietly going about his deathly business. It's only afterwards when they look back that they find out about his love of money and its corrupting influence on his soul.

He's been the treasurer of the twelve. In John chapter 12, he fussed over Mary wasting so much money pouring perfume over Jesus' feet. Don't you know that that perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor?

Very self-righteous. And John tells us that Judas didn't care about the poor, but because he was a thief as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to whatever was put into it.

[11 : 03] This is not an easy matter for Jesus. Verse 21, it says, he was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.

When he says he was troubled in spirit, he uses the same word that was used in John chapter 11 when Jesus went to see the family of Lazarus after Lazarus had died.

He was deeply troubled, he was deeply moved in spirit and wept. Very difficult for Jesus.

And I don't think the grief is solely for himself, I don't think it really is about him. It's got to do with the loss of relationship.

In John chapter 11, the distress at what death had done for his friend Lazarus and for his family. And now here in John 13, distress for what was about to happen with Judas.

[12 : 03] Judas is going to be lost. He'll be gone and he will not recover. From what he does. And Jesus says, one of you is going to betray me.

It's a certain finality. He knows there's going to be no turning back. He has loved Judas and Judas is turning away from Jesus.

Jesus isn't turning away from Judas. People walk away from Christ. Christ doesn't walk away from people. But we are confirmed in our own decision.

And up until now, Judas has been doing his dirty work in the darkness. And Jesus outs him. Here he is, he's in the group of disciples and Jesus says something which provokes a final decision from Judas.

Even up to this point, he's still got options. Judas could still be on his knees saying, oh Lord, I've made a terrible mistake.

[13 : 14] I've sold you for 30 pieces of silver. I'm so wrong. I just don't know what to do. Please forgive me. But he doesn't.

And his heart is set on his course of action and he is not changing direction. Now there's some intriguing clues in this passage about how much Jesus still loves Judas right up till now.

I'm not going to spend much time on it, but the disciples are probably all reclining around the table, around the lounges. They're sort of head to head, shoulder to shoulder, back to back. And it seems like Judas is actually lying on the left-hand side of Jesus, which would have been the place of honour at this dinner, the very last dinner with his disciples, and Judas is given the place of honour.

And John is on the other side of Jesus, the right-hand side of Jesus. John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John is the one who hears every word of this conversation, that not all of the other disciples hear.

And Jesus says, one of you is going to betray me. And in verse 24, Peter, somewhere out there across the table, catches John's eye and looks at him and says, ask him who he means.

[14 : 44] And John quietly leans back on Jesus and he says, who is it? And Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.

And then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. And as soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him and Jesus said, what you are about to do, do quickly.

Judas took the bread and verse 30 says, he went out, it was night. It was the moment of departure.

This friend of Jesus walked away never to return. The only time that John mentions Judas again is when he leads the group of soldiers to Jesus to arrest him.

Doesn't even bother referring to Judas' suicide. He went out is the end of his association with Jesus. He'd known him intimately, he sold him out, it was a moment of immense betrayal.

[15 : 59] And the scripture says it was night. It was night. One of the great themes of John's gospel is light and darkness and the struggle between them.

In John chapter 8 verse 12 Jesus said I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. The light of life.

Jesus loves Judas even to the very last moment but he goes into the night to do his dark deed and it becomes a very dark night for his own soul.

He walks away from Jesus out into the darkness never to return. Brothers and sisters if we walk away from the Lord Jesus Christ there is nowhere else to go.

For John this is an absolutely poignant moment in his gospel. It seems as though darkness begins to rain but Jesus turns to his disciples and says it is not so.

[17 : 10] verse 31 when Judas was gone Jesus said now is the son of man 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.

See despite the darkness of the hour the glory of God is at work in the most extraordinary way. God is doing something big. The son will glorify the father God himself will glorify the son.

It's a magic moment. The disciples still really don't understand what's going on. Satan has just made his big move. He's played his hand. God is about to come up trumps with his.

And a cosmic struggle is being played out. Satan acts malevolently and God is about to triumph in the most unexpected way. It's a glorious moment. The son will glorify the father by submitting to his father's will.

He will die for our sins. God will glorify the son by raising Christ from the dead and making him lord of all. Feel the moment. Judas makes a fatal decision.

[18 : 17] He walks, he goes out from Christ and Jesus turns to those who are left and says again, very shortly I'm going away from you but this is what I want of you. A new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you so you must love one another.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Judas the betrayer of love is gone, a cancer has gone from amongst them and now Jesus gives a command that is designed to keep everyone together when he is no longer present and this command lived out will bring unity to the body of Christ.

Love one another as I have loved you, you must love one another. Brothers and sisters, we must love one another.

Came up on the ABC Q&A; program the other night, I don't know if you saw it last Monday night, but the discussion had moved to homosexuality. Can't tell you the background, don't need to know, but what happened was people who called themselves atheists were very quick to turn on Christians and tell them that Jesus said to you guys that you've got to love everybody.

Unbelievers quoted the verse back at Christians. Now a better verse for them to have quoted back at Christians would have been from Luke chapter 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan, because believers are taught by Jesus to love our neighbours as ourselves by being merciful to them.

[19 : 47] And we are to show mercy to people outside the Christian family. That's a true thing from Luke chapter 10. But in John 13, where we are, Jesus is addressing the 11 disciples who are left and he tells them to love one another.

He tells them to love the team. This is about love within the Christian community. It's about the depth of relationship which we are to have with one another in Christ.

Now this is a team that has come together. They didn't self-select. They weren't a bunch of friends. They weren't people who just got themselves together. They were people who had been selected, chosen by their Lord and Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I first came to church, when I first became to Christ, not church, Christ, my dad took me aside for a father-son talk, which was a very unusual father-son talk because it didn't happen very often.

And I can remember where I was standing down in the garage at home and my dad turned and very quietly said, it's all right to go to church but be careful how involved you get because there's a lot of funny people around those churches.

[20 : 53] And you can see I've really heeded his advice about how involved to get. And I talked to the minister about what my dad said, looking for his support, looking for some encouragement.

He said, yeah, your dad's right. There are a lot of funny people around churches. We are a weird mob. And if you are in Christ, if you are my brother or sister, it's because Christ has chosen you and he's chosen me.

And we are his because of him. And the Lord Jesus has laid down his life for both of us. And he has loved us and so we have become his.

So the old thing about coming to church, sitting quietly, getting it all from the front, going home without any interaction with other believers was sterile and it was wrong. It's nonsense.

How can we even begin to love one another if we do not know one another? In 1 John 2 verses 9-10, love amongst believers is the test of whether we are walking with Christ.

[22 : 10] Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. I can think of a terrible fallout between two brothers 30 years ago.

One refusing to be reconciled, the other making numerous attempts. I can tell you that today only one of them continues to walk and grow in Christ.

Not hard to guess which one still participates or no longer participates in the church family even though his wife and children still do. I was a young believer. I was deeply impacted by that conflict.

It was the first time that I'd seen two brothers whom I loved and respected fall out with one another and not be reconciled. Couldn't believe it. As the pastor at St Paul's responsible for our community groups I have a dream that our groups will be a place where we connect deeply with each other.

I hope they're not places that we come to demonstrate who I am and all my knowledge and stuff like that. I hope that they will be places where we are known for our love of each other. I hope that they are places where we encourage and support one another to walk with Christ.

[23 : 26] I hope that they are places where we will show practical care to one another. When do you feel loved? What makes you feel loved?

someone notices you, speaks with you, they seem interested in you before they want to tell you who they are and everything that's going on for them.

I was at the oxygen conference for pastors at the Australian Technology Park the other week with numbers of members of the team. 2,000 pastors or Christian workers under the same roof.

It was a great time. But what if a bomb went off? And the Christian church in Australia suddenly lost its leadership?

Or if we're in another country where they were imprisoned? So what if we were left without any clergy? And what if our buildings were confiscated and destroyed? And what if we did not have prayer books or musical instruments and some of the things that make our gatherings on Sunday happen?

[24 : 50] And what if God left us, all that God left us with were the Bible and the people of God, what would we do? I hope that we'd gather together.

We'd do it like the Russians. We'd go out into the trees and meet in the bush if we had to, if we weren't allowed to. And I hope that we would read the Bible to each other and teach each other what it meant.

And I hope that we would pray and that we would care for one another in practical ways. Not unlike the first believers. believers. They became persona non grata at the traditional church, a band from the local synagogue preaching that Jesus is risen from the dead.

They met together to encourage each other in Christ on the first day of the week. They became known for the way that they loved each other. They had caring ministry to one another that cost serious money.

They sold houses and land and laid it at the apostles' feet. Money was used to assist the poor among them. The world looked on and they saw the extraordinary love of these people who kept talking about a crucified and resurrected saviour.

[26 : 01] Their preaching was backed up by care that cost them. Jesus said to the eleven when Judas is gone, a new command I give to 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. We can say that we believe in Jesus but it will be evidenced by how we love other believers.

It's a nonsense to say that you believe in Christ if you don't love other believers. I heard a wonderful story of forgiveness the other day.

A believer went to assist you in Christ and confessed a great offence against them from years ago. It was a powerful act of love and a powerful act of reconciliation.

Some of you have done hard yards, you know, going up and down to the nursing home every Sunday morning until Joan died recently, bringing her up for church. That was an act of love and service to her.

[27 : 13] Charles Spurgeon was a Baptist preacher in the 19th century and Joseph Parker was another preacher in London and they both had churches and on one occasion Parker commented on the poor condition of children who were admitted to Spurgeon's orphanage.

And it was reported to Spurgeon, however, that Parker had criticised the orphanage itself. And Spurgeon blasted Parker the next week from the pulpit. And the attack was printed in the newspapers and it became the talk of the town and people flocked to Parker's church the next Sunday to hear his rebuttal.

People love scandal, don't they? And he said, I understand Dr. Spurgeon is not in his pulpit today and this is the Sunday that they used to take an offering for the orphanage.

And I suggest that we take a love offering here this morning for it instead. And the crowd was delighted and the ushers had to empty the collection plate three times.

And later that week there was a knock at Parker's study and it was Spurgeon. You know, Parker, you've practised grace on me.

[28 : 25] You have given me not what I deserved. You have given me what I needed. God reconciled those two men through an act of love.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, the Macedonian churches gave money to believers in Judea and their giving is described as out of the most extreme trial. Their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

That is an act of love. Brothers and sisters, in the end, the love of the Lord Jesus is seen in action. He is about to willingly go to the cross.

He will become the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And when Christ commands us to love one another as I have loved you, he gives us what we need for true unity when he is gone.

He gives us what we need to witness to the world. Love will always be seen in action. St. Paul's has a rich evangelical history for which we can give God thanks.

[29 : 34] This is a church that has raised up and sent many people into ministry both here and overseas. But wouldn't it be great if people looked at St. Paul's now and into the future and said, look at how those believers love one another.

Look at how they care. Look at how they forgive. Look at how they delight to be with each other. Look at how they delight to know and proclaim the crucified and risen Saviour.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

Amen.