

Bible Study for Fourth Sunday of Easter May 15, 2022

Our text for this Sunday is:

- John 13:31-35
- Revelation 21:1-6

Opening context: We have a very brief Gospel reading this week. Jesus telling us to love one another...sounds easy enough...right? BUT...the context here is very important. Just before this text event is the whole exchange between Jesus and Judas, when the two of them are the only ones who know that Judas' betrayal is at hand. Following this text is when Jesus tells Peter that he will deny Him three times. The astounding fact is that the whole language of loving one another as disciples is wedged between these two encounters of betrayal and denial. Lifting vs. 31-35 out of the context of betrayal and denial seems to make it just a morality piece, an injunction to love with sweet feelings and kind sentiments. However, keeping these verses in this context makes it a call to a radical kind of love.

Read John 13:31-35

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, ^[a] God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

How does this passage make you feel? Hopeful? Disappointed? Challenged? Another emotion?

What leads a person to love as Jesus loved, and how can we better position ourselves to live and love in this way?

What do you think Jesus would have to say about our abilities to love beyond what we feel we deserve or that the other person deserves? What kind of effect can that have on a life? On our world?

This passage invites us to ponder what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

- So, what does a Christian life look like? What is the *most* identifiable characteristic?
- Read Matt 22:37-40; Gal 5:22....what do those say?
- According to this passage, what must a disciple of Christ do in order to be *known* as a disciple of Christ?
- Could it really be as simple as a life of love?

- Could we really say that to be a Christian is to love, and to love is to be a Christian? Or is it more complicated than that?

Imagine that someone who does not know anything about Christianity approaches you and wants to know about this thing called “Christian love” and how it is different? What would you say?

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being “I nailed it” and 1 being “I need some work here...”) where do you think you fall on the scale of “by this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another?” And yes...this means even *that* person.

How has the Christian world done, over the years, in loving one another and being recognized as Jesus’ disciples by our love?

Revelation 21:1-6

21Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” ⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

What do you like in this text? What is challenging?

Where have you heard this text read most often? Why do you think that is?

What do you think “I am making all things new” means? What might need to “pass away” for newness to happen?

What if dying to your old life and living into the newness of God is the call and message of Revelation and the new creation that God is making new? And what if that is done through the lens of the love Jesus is talking about in our Gospel text? How might that affect the world around you?