

## **Sermons at the Anglican Church of Luxembourg**

**Preached by Rev. Geoff Read on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

**Text: John 13:31-35**

To be a follower of Jesus, a disciple, is to become a learner

That is what the word means: and not a book, head only, theory learner

This is about lived, life-shaping knowledge

To be a learner is about a willingness to now just learn new things

But also to learn about old things in new ways

Which is what Jesus means when he gives them a “new” commandment

What has been at the heart of the Jewish Commandments – to love the Lord your God with heart, soul, strength and might and: to love your neighbour as yourself

So the command to love is not new to these Jewish disciples

It is the way of doing it: Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another

And in doing so others will see that they are his disciples

Growing in our understanding of love and growing in our actual loving is what it means to be, what the early Church called themselves, “People of the Way” – an ongoing conversion of mind, heart, will and actions to become people of love

READ v34b So what is this “just as I have loved you” like?

I find it intriguing and compelling to pause and consider the context in which Jesus chooses to utter these words

For here they are at the Last Supper sandwiched between foot-washing and betrayal on the one hand and the promise of the Holy Spirit’s empowerment on the other

On the one hand, actions that bring us face to face with our powerlessness to love, while on the other God’s grace to transform us to become those who can love as Jesus loves

Jesus has taken off his outer garment and taken the bowl and the towel – the passage is introduced with these words: READ 13:1

This love of Jesus is proactive, always takes the initiative, seeking ways and opportunities to love - as John says in a subsequent letter: this is love – not that we loved Him but that He first loved us

Peter resists this awesome love, ashamed by his own lack of love in the same way that much earlier he had urged Jesus to leave him, for he was a sinful man

But Jesus is urgent and compelling in his love and eventually Peter yields, longing to be overwhelmed by the love of Jesus – not just my feet but my head, my whole self

Another pair of feet have been washed too. But they carry that disciple, Judas, in a different direction, away from love: READ 13:30

And it is as Judas out goes that Jesus speaks the words of our passage: READ v31-32

These are complex words, but just hold on to the fact that the words “glory” and “glorified” in Jn’s gospel is about the unmistakable action of God

It is a term used by Jesus of his being lifted up, crucified and then raised to life again and all that flows from that in the purposes of God – things not unmistakable at the time, but only later, for this is another of the resurrection sayings that the dps could only grasp at a later date

And note the word “Now” – from that moment on Jesus is an unchangeable course of action – and even though it will be Judas who betrays, the Sanhedrin and Pilate who try and pass sentence, soldiers who whip and crucify, it is Jesus who remains in control – Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.

That is the power of this new, Jesus way of loving  
That is the empowering way of love

In his farewell words to his dps Jesus then goes on, recorded in Ch 14, in a section in which He assures them that He is going ahead to prepare the way and also crucially promises them the HS

- the Spirit who would be given at Pentecost,
- the Spirit who will lead them into all truth,
- the Spirit who will also empower them to love,

But the Spirit who must first speak deeply to each one of the dps about how much that they are loved by Him and the Father: READ 14:21

And this is crucial. This is at the heart of this lived learning of being a disciple and at the heart of this new commandment of love

We love because He has first loved us.

That is what Peter had to yield to as his feet were washed

It’s what turns religion into faith – as I allow the Spirit to speak to me, to enable me to experience the love of the Father and the Son for me

We cannot love in this new way until we have allowed ourselves to be loved

So, if you want to know what this new way of loving really looks like, what love really is we need to daily suspend what we think we know and instead look at Jesus

If you want to experience what love really look like, what love really us: allow Jesus to love you

And only then will we be in a position to hear the new command aright, to love others