

Our Mission: It's All About Love!"

04-28-13

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus and His disciples at the Last Supper. I know some of you might be thinking, "Isn't this just a little backwards? We've already witnessed His suffering, death, and resurrection and His appearing to many people after?" What's so important that we have to go back in time?" Because our focus at that time was on Jesus' death and resurrection, it was easy to miss one of His most important teachings!

Open your Bible to John 13. Jesus has just taken a servant's role and washed His disciples feet. He's also told that one of them was going to betray Him. But even after that, Jesus doesn't spend time or energy condemning Judas for what he's about to do. Instead, Jesus gives Judas a bit of bread, a gesture of friendship, and then sends him out to do what Satan has led him to do.

Let's continue the story. Look at verses 31-33, *"When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'"*

Jesus had a very important message to share with the disciples, but He holds back until Judas is gone because He knows Judas' heart. Jesus calls the disciples His little children. This is a real term of closeness and shows His great love for them.

Jesus saw His death as the moment of His glory. He tells the disciples He is going somewhere they cannot come. He knows He's going to the cross to suffer and die taking all people's place for all their sin.

Then Jesus continues to teach His disciples and all people on exactly how He wants us to live. He has a mission for us! He wants us to love! Verses 34-35, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

This command to love wasn't new. It was part of Old Testament law. It was new now in that the love was to be shared with others not because they belonged to the same nation, but because they belonged to Christ! And it was new because it was to be the expression of the perfect love of Christ, which the disciples had seen in His life and would also see in His death. What does your love say about your commitment to Jesus Christ? I think there are four reasons to follow this mission and love one another.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER REFLECTS CHRIST. The standard of loving others is the way Christ loved us! Jesus set the example for the way we were to love one another. Anything less than His example – falls short! How did He love others? By giving Himself to them! He gave His time, talents and finally His life!

Jesus didn't give us a suggestion about loving others. He didn't give an opinion or say it might be a good idea. He gave us a commandment: love! Open to Romans 13.

LOVING ONE ANOTHER COMPLETES THE LAW. Look at verses 8-9, *"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

A women's letter, "Dearest Jimmy, No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you! Yours forever, Marie. P.S., And congratulations on winning the state lottery." Sometimes love isn't really love!

Open to 1 John 3. LOVING ONE ANOTHER IS AN EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. Verses 10-11, *“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”* As we love, we’re being identified as one of Christ’s children and our faith in Him as our Savior and Lord!

Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us with His death and resurrection, we’re free to love! As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, *“Even an enemy has nothing to expect from a follower of Jesus but unqualified love!”*

LOVING ONE ANOTHER IS A RESPONSE TO GOD LOVING US. Look at the next page to 1 John 4:7-11, *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

Because of His love for us, we’re equipped by Him to carry out this mission of sharing His love in the world. As we know Him and live for Him, it’s His generous love that flows through us that the world sees and defines how we and the Church are known in the world. We need to be witnesses of His love in everything we do!

A question, “If you asked around our community what Shepherd of the Sierra and it’s fellowship are known for, would love be their answer?”