

Maundy Thursday reflection. 2nd April 2026

John 13: 1-17, 31-35

A new commandment I give unto you; that you love one another as I have loved you. Did you know that the word **Maundy** is derived from the Latin word for "command," and refers to this commandment from Jesus?

Previously Jesus had taught that the two greatest commandments were– to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and to love your neighbour as yourself. Now he says to love one another as I have loved you. What is new about this commandment? What is different?

It seems to me it is a higher call – in fact the highest – to be told to love as Jesus loved. I know some have struggled with the idea of loving others as you love yourself – either because they don't think they should be loving themselves, or they in fact feel they don't love themselves very much. So with this new commandment we have a clear example of how we should love – we are to love as Jesus loved. Wo – what a high call. For...

Oh, how he loves us, can we ever love with that love? He commands us to.

How did he love? In the gospel reading, John says having loved his own, he loved them to the end. He loved them all, the good, the bad and the ugly! He loved the fisherman, the tax-collector, the betrayer.

I have been following the Lectio 365 Lenten devotionals reflecting on the desert fathers and mothers. Yesterday they looked at 1 John 4. The same John who wrote the gospel picks up Jesus' command to love one another...

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

The desert dwelling father Jerome (347 – 420 AD), recounts a story of the Apostle John in his old age. Apparently he would be carried to church meetings where excitement would be great at the prospect of hearing the words from the last living apostle who had been with Jesus! But John's message was always short and the same; *Little children, love one another*. With that he would collapse back on his stretcher to be carried to the next location! Maybe I should adopt his style – would more people listen and put into action a

message of 5 words?! But I don't want to deprive you of a few more words...so let's take a longer look at Jesus' example of love.

On this night...before he goes to the cross – Jesus does an extraordinary thing – he washes his disciples feet. He kneels before them, he humbles himself, he cleanses them, he loves them.

Peter of-course doesn't get it – Lord don't wash my feet! I should be washing yours! Jesus replies unless I wash you, you have no part of me. This foot washing is an acted parable of his washing away of sin through his sacrifice...love in action...Jesus was heading to the cross where he would take on all our sin so that we could be clean and so be reconciled to our holy God. In Hobart on Maundy Thursday the C3 church arranged sign writing in the clear blue sky showing a cross, an equals sign, then love heart. Jesus' love is defined by the cross, it was costly love. It is that calibre of love he calls the disciples to.

So how did Jesus love them? He chose them, he called them regardless of their background or status. He cared for them, he nurtured them, he kept them close. Then the day after that evening meal...he gave his life for them. He gave his life for us. Peter tells Jesus later that night that he would lay down his life for Jesus, but Jesus said, no - you will deny me...and that is what Peter did – 3 times. It was Jesus who laid down his life for Peter.

Peter denied that he even knew Jesus, and yet how Jesus loved him. After the resurrection and Jesus appears to the disciples what does he do? He re-instates Peter...he gives him a charge to look after others. He was restored into a right relationship – he was loved by Jesus.

So how we are to love as Jesus loved? We are to serve with humility – metaphorically wash one another's feet – regardless of background, status and so on. Jesus loved unconditionally, unreservedly. Who did he love? He loved the unlovely, the disregarded, and the outcast. He loved the leper, he loved the Samaritan woman, the blind man, the beggar, the demon-possessed, the tax-collector, the children, the crowds of followers. He healed them, he touched them, he fed them, he accepted them.

So, with Jesus as our example – Who should we love and serve, who's feet should we wash? We are to love the disabled, the homeless, the mentally ill, the lonely, the foreigner, the refugee, the politicians, the business men and women, the tourists, the drug addicted, the single mum, or dad, the youth, the elderly, the children, the men that sit and drink each week on our picnic tables, and those sitting around us right now. We are to love *all* as Jesus loved.

And we are to forgive as Jesus forgave – this is a real act of love.

Would you love your betrayer? Jesus did – he washed Judas feet -even though he knew he was about to hand him over to be killed.

Would you love a friend who publicly denies they even know you? Jesus did – he forgave Peter...he loved him. And the result of this love and forgiveness from Jesus, this re-instatement to a right relationship with him? Peter went on to be the rock that Jesus spoke of. Peter went on to boldly proclaim Jesus as Lord, there was no more denying. Peter knew and experienced Jesus great love and went on to share that love. And he too in the end laid down his life for the love of Christ.

This depth of loving and forgiving is very hard. I have had conversations with people who find it so hard...how hard it is to forgive an ex-husband who was abusive...how hard it is to let go of bitterness towards those who hurt you in the school yard, how hard it is to love the ones who are always putting you and others down. How hard it is to forgive the greedy and powerful who cause thousands of civilians to die in the name of war.

How hard it is to forgive those who hurt innocent children.

On the Alpha course there is a testimony of forgiveness from Corrie Ten boom...She was a Dutch woman who hid Jews in her house during the second world war. Her family were caught and sent to Ravensbrook concentration camp. Her father and her sister died there. Corrie survived and lived to be an inspirational Christian author and speaker.

She tells how she was speaking at a Church one night when at the end a German man came up to speak to her. As he approached her she recognized him and initially froze. This man was one of the prison guards from the concentration camp. She says she remembered even having to parade naked in front of him. And he was now standing in front of her. He came to her and said he had become a Christian and wanted to ask her forgiveness. Her initial reaction was NO I can't do this. This was too hard, too painful. And then she allowed the love of God to move in her and she shook his hand and forgave him. What a powerful witness of love. She said she felt God's love pour out through her. She couldn't do it on her own, but with God's spirit within her she could and she did.

We are to love and forgive – even when it is so difficult and seems unjust to us. We are to leave the judging to God...we are to love.

And when we love as Jesus loved us then he says others will see and know that we are his disciples. They will know we are Christians by our love. We are to love those in our Church community and beyond. What a powerful witness that would be if we were truly

loving and serving one another as Jesus has commanded us to. Love is a mark of being his disciple. Love is what will draw others to Jesus. Let us be his loving witnesses.

At times it will be difficult and we may not even want to love a particular person, but like Corrie Ten Boom we can ask God to help us, and he will.

A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. The love of Jesus was poured out for us and he asks us to pour it out on others.

His love; so amazing, so divine.

As John would say... *little children love one another.*