Maundy Thursday Sermon

The Love of Christ: An Example for Us to Follow

John 13:34-35

**I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all *people* will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”**

This evening as we gather to prepare our hearts and minds for the events which will take place on Good Friday let us take a few moments to discuss why this night is so special and how we can show the love of God by following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture that we have read together tonight is the heart of the gospel and the reason why God has sent His Son into the world. He sent His Son to earth to show us that He loves us and desires that all His creation would be reunited with Him through the forgiveness of sins that is only made possible by the sacrifice of Christ.

 The word love is used very openly in our culture today, but many times the way in which it is used is not in the same context as we see Jesus using it in this passage. What has just taken place at the last supper was Jesus had finished washing the feet of the disciples. After doing this He told them that the best way for others to know they were His disciples was by the love that they showed each other. As a way of helping us to better understand what Jesus means in these verses we need to know what kind of love Jesus is referring to.

 In Scripture there are four different words for love that come from the Greek language. We need to familiarize ourselves with each and then determine which is the proper kind of love Jesus is speaking of in these verses. The first word for love in Greek is pronounced Eros, this is the kind of romantic love that exists between a husband and a wife. When God created Adam and Eve this was the kind of love He created for them to share. “Then the man said, “At last this is bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called ‘woman,’ Because she was taken out of man.”

 The second Greek for love is Storge, which is a love that exists between members of a family. In his epistle to the Romans Paul speaks of this type of love when he writes “*Be* devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor,” Another example of this use of Storge is when the Apostle John speaks of Christ loving us as brothers in his first epistle chapter 3 verse 1.

 The third type of love in Greek is the word Philia, which is a deep friendship that people experience when they go through a tough time. An example from Scripture of this type of love was the friendship that existed between young David and King Saul’s son Jonathan. Their friendship withstood much struggle and difficulty, especially once God has rejected Saul as being the king of Israel.

 The fourth word for love in Greek is the word Agape, which is the type of love that Jesus is speaking of in these verses. This is a selfless sacrificial love where the person showing the love does so out of care and concern for the other person without any though to their own desires. When Jesus gave His life up for all of us He was not thinking of His own glory, but He was rather concerned about all who would be freed from the prison of sin. In 1 John 4:8 the Apostle John writes “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” We learn that God’s very nature is love and we would never know what love is unless God had shown it to us through the life of Christ.

 This evening, we have gathered on Maundy Thursday. What exactly is Maundy Thursday and why are we gathered here this evening? Tonight, we are remembering the night when Jesus and His disciples ate their Last Supper together before He was betrayed and eventually crucified. As a part of the Last Supper Jesus instituted communion where He used the elements from Passover, which was the meal the Israelites ate the night that the Angel of Death took the lives of the first born of Egypt. On that fateful night God was able to secure the release of Israel from the bonds of slavery in Egypt. The unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine were used to commemorate that night and was used as a remembrance of all that God had done to free Israel from slavery. Jesus also uses the elements for remembrance, but this time they represent the freedom that Christ has given to all who trust in Him from their sins. Without Jesus all of us would be lost in our sins. Jesus has given His life showing us agape love because everything that He has done for us cost Him His life. When He was hanging on the cross He was thinking of us.

 As we partake of communion this evening let us take the example Christ has provided us and give of ourselves unselfishly to the work that He has called us to do. We are commanded to love one another with agape love and always seek what is best for others. What is best for others is that they all know who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for His creation and the joy they can experience if they would put their trust in Him. Before we go out and share this message we must first love each other showing the world that it is the love of God that keeps us together. As we go to our homes let us show this selfless love to all and help them see that Christ loves them as well. May this always be on our hearts and minds. Please join me in a word of prayer.