

A New Command? ~ John 13:31-35

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ April 28, 2013

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”



Grace, mercy and peace are yours through our risen Savior,

One of the things that I am noticing as I have gotten a little older, is that some of the toys that I used to play with as a child are making a comeback. I remember not too long ago seeing a commercial for *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Now I think the cartoon show has made a comeback a little while ago, but now they're back to making action figures. I used to spend hours playing with my TMNT action figures. Just to go down memory lane I looked up other toys that are making comebacks, maybe you recognize a few of these: Tinker toys, Power Rangers, Spirograph, Easy Bake Oven.

It seems that every so many years the toy companies pull out these old classics and make even more money off them. You can also see this with the limited edition Disney movies that come out every so often. But whether it is with toys or movies, however many years have passed, it's basically the same toy, it's basically the same movie. Sure there might be some shinier gizmos and gadgets, high-definition and all that, but it's basically the same.

That might have been what the disciples were thinking when Jesus told them, “**A new command I give you: Love one another.**” Love one another? Of course they were to love one another. We might wonder too, why did Jesus call this a “new” command, hadn't it been around for a long time? If you are thinking that, you're correct. In Leviticus, God commands his people, “**Love your neighbor as yourself.**” So, is this just an old command that Jesus is “making” new again, similar to companies bringing out old product lines? It certainly seems that way. What is he talking about, A NEW COMMAND? What makes this command new is that it is:

1. From A Glorified Savior
2. To Love As He Loved

(1)

For the last couple weeks, in the time after Easter, we have taken time to look at the different accounts of Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection. He appeared to the disciples in an upper room – first without Thomas there, then with him, next Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee and fed them breakfast. Last week we heard about what Jesus' resurrection from the dead means for us, that we can join the celebration of the ages up in heaven. Now we hear how Jesus was getting his

disciples ready for the time when he would no longer be with him. But we go back to a time before Jesus rose from the dead, actually to the night when he was betrayed. We see even here, Jesus had his disciple's well-being in mind, to give them comfort for a time he would not be with them, not only when he was going to the cross, but even when he was going up to heaven.

Jesus had just dismissed Judas from the table in the upper room where they were celebrating the annual Passover feast. **"When he was gone, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified.'"** His disciples may have been thinking, 'What is Jesus talking about, glorified?' Jesus had been their teacher for the last three years, Jesus had their respect, he had their full attention, so why is he now talking about glory? Just notice how many times the word 'glorify' is used in this sentence, **"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him, if God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once."**

Doesn't it sound a little bit like the chicken and the egg question? Did the Father glorify the Son first, or did the Son glorify the Father? But really it doesn't matter much, because it's this wonderful circle of glory between the Father and Son. The real question then becomes, "how was Jesus glorified?" (since the Father said he would glorify the Son at once) Maybe Jesus was talking about the stuff that would happen after all of that pain and torture, the miraculous resurrection, the other miracles, and the ascending into heaven, ruling all of heaven and earth. That sure seems glorious. That's something I would follow. And yes, those are glorious things, but the glory Jesus was talking about also included the pain and torture that he was about to go and face. How was this glory? I'm glad you asked.

Ever since our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell from God's grace, fell into sin, God has given a promise to mankind. A promise to repair what was broken, a promise to make right what went wrong, to restore a right relationship between God and man. For centuries, Adam's descendants waited for the promise to be kept. For centuries, God continued to reveal more and more about this Savior – he would come from the line of Abraham, he would be from the tribe of Judah, he would be a king, he would be a lamb, he would be perfect, he would be God himself.

And it wasn't until the birth of Jesus that God's promise was fulfilled. John the Baptist testified to his mission, **"Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** Everything that Jesus said, did and thought was perfect, it glorified God. And it glorified God because he was, he is the Son of Man. This name that Jesus uses for himself comes from the book of Daniel. **"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven."** This name brought out Jesus' human side. But to this Son of man was also attributed mighty acts. Daniel also said that this son of man is given all authority, glory and sovereign power. It was Jesus' way of saying there was something more. The beginning of John's gospel brings this out, **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."**

Jesus' perfect life glorified God, and now his sacrificial death would also glorify God. So we go back to what makes this NEW COMMAND so special? Because it is coming from a glorified Son. A Son who glorified himself and his Father in heaven with the chain of events that Judas started. This includes his sacrificial death, his descent into hell, his triumphant resurrection and ascension, and his reign in glory. It is because this NEW COMMAND is from a glorified Son that makes it new and different, that makes us want to listen to it.

What makes this command new is how Jesus applied it. Yes, God had told the Israelites to love, even Jesus said fulfillment of the law is to **“love your neighbor as yourself.”** But even this is not the same as what Jesus told his disciples to do on the night before his death. Let’s look at the command again: **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”** Now at first, this may not seem like that big a deal, let’s just all love each other and we’ll be fine. That isn’t what Jesus said, he gave us a standard to live up to, to love as he loved.

The disciples needed to only go back perhaps an hour for a demonstration of this love. Jesus, the master, took off his outer robe, wrapped a servant’s garb around himself, and washed his disciple’s stinky, smelly feet. If that isn’t love, I don’t know what is. But this was the kind of love that Jesus was talking about. An *agape* love, a love that doesn’t expect anything in return – nada, zip, zilch. A love that we as sinful human beings have a hard time demonstrating. Maybe it’s because we feel like we might be taken advantage of, maybe we want something in return, even if it’s just appreciation. A simple test to see how we measure up to God’s standard of *agape* love, use 1 Corinthians chapter 13, and instead of “love”, insert your name:

John is patient, John is kind. Sue does not envy, Sue does not boast, Sue is not proud. Jason does not dishonor others, Jason is not self-seeking, Jason is not easily angered, Jason keeps no record of wrongs. Kristin does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Colin always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Joan never fails.

I am sure there are times when we feel like we have kept this command, and we have adequately measured up. But how many times do we fall short? I’m almost ashamed to put my name there because I have fallen short. I don’t like having other people know that I’ve fallen short. So maybe I make excuses for why I am the way I am, “God made me this way” “Everybody’s doing it” “God isn’t fair for expecting perfection.” I want to give the impression of a tough guy who knows what he is doing, who’s got everything put together. But life isn’t perfect, is it? We aren’t perfect, are we?

Our imperfection, our not measuring up to God’s standard’s leaves us with only one person to blame, myself. Because I have not followed Christ’s NEW COMMAND, or God’s “old” command for that matter, I deserve an eternity away from God in hell. This is not God’s fault, but my own. But you know what is ‘God’s fault?’ – that he did show us that *agape* love. **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”** This was a love that expected nothing in return, for we could give nothing in return. It was a love that took all our sins from our shoulders and endured the wrath of a holy and righteous God.

We will never be able to do enough to thank God for his sacrifice for us, and that’s not the reason we are told to love. Our life is not us trying to pay back a loan that we have to God. Our life is lived with this NEW COMMAND. A NEW COMMAND that has a fresh flavor, A NEW COMMAND that is seen in light of the cross of Christ. It is this NEW COMMAND that we no longer hang on to the sins of the past, but move forward in faith, in love, we love as he loved.

I love without expecting anything in return. I become the best husband and father I can be, putting the needs, hopes and desires of my wife and child in front of my own. I show love to my neighbor – whether they live across the street or halfway across the world. I give them the benefit of the doubt, I

do what I can to help them out. I love my God without expecting anything back. That may be a weird way to look at it after all God has done, but it's true. To come to church, read your Bibles, contribute your time and money without making a bargain with God.

And why are we doing this? Not so that we show the world what great people we are, but that we show the world what a great God we have. We show the world that we are Christ's disciples, we glorify God with our actions. This really changes the whole meaning of love. There are hundreds of examples in the New Testament of Jesus' disciples doing just this. There are hundreds of examples today of Jesus' disciples glorifying God with the love they show. The love isn't the NEW COMMAND, because anybody can love. But a believer's love is different, a believer's love is new. Because a believer's love is done in faith, a believer's love is done with the knowledge and belief of Christ's sacrifice. Amen!