

### Jesus' "New" Command That We Love One Another Isn't New Because of the Command to Love; What's New Is the Command to Love As *He* Loved His Disciples, in Concrete Service to One Another in *This* Congregation

To prepare his disciples for his departure at the Crucifixion—and by implication his departure again at the Ascension forty days after the Resurrection—Jesus shares a last meal with his disciples, washes their feet, and then “speaks an innocent, yet troubling word,” the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said Sunday.

“He says to them: ‘I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.’

“What is troubling about this word from Jesus,” Pastor Thelander continued, “is that the command to love was *not* new. The disciples had known and heard this command for a long time. It was very much part of their tradition. Leviticus 19:18 rings in their ears: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“Love” is such a theme in our culture that our familiarity with the idea “can actually rob it of its power, because we divorce it from the life and actions of the One who speaks it to us,” Pastor Thelander said. So, “How do you put a new spin on an old theme? Where’s the newness in something so familiar as love . . . ?

“To answer that, all we need to do is return to the text, and to the words of Jesus:



“St. Paul Healing the Cripple at Lystra”, by Karel Dujardin (1622-1678). © Web Gallery of Art. The painting originally portrayed Barnabas behind Paul. After the healing, Paul says in this Sunday’s N.T. reading that God has always provided the world with witness of Himself. We’ll hear Psalm 67:2, “Let your ways be known upon earth”; Rev. 22:24, that the nations “will walk in (Christ’s) light”; and John 14:26, the promise of the presence of the Holy Spirit as Christ’s witness.

‘Love one another, as I have loved you.’ How has Jesus loved these men? Well, . . . on the very night in question here, he has picked up a towel and washed their feet.

“The love to which Jesus calls his disciples here has most (if not all) of the romantic sentiment drained off of it, until all that is left are tangible acts of servanthood. And Jesus says that *this* love—these concrete, tangible acts of service—are what demonstrate to the world that his disciples belong to him.

“On this fifth Sunday of Easter, there is a very important question I need to ask you. The question: *How is Jesus present in our world when he is no longer physically here?* We know the answer to that question, don’t we? He is present in our world through the simple, concrete tangible acts of mercy and servanthood of God’s people—acts of love shown not merely to a world in need, but also expressed with one another within the Body of Christ.”

“Loving others is easy when ‘others’ are thought about in generic terms, but when you speak about specific people with real names, faces and personalities, people who may be sitting in front of you (p.2→)

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Sundays	10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service	<b>We welcome donations for The Harbinger.</b>
	11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation	
	11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion.	
	6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Evensong, tea, refreshments.	

**Thursdays:** 5:30 p.m.: Evening Prayers. 6:00 p.m.: Singing & discussing hymns.

**Readings, 5/13:** Acts 14:8-18; Ps. 67; Rev. 21:22—22:5; John 14:23-31.

**5/20:** Acts 1:1-11; Ps. 110:1-5; Eph. 1:15-23; Luke 24:49-53.

**Prayer Emphases:** Chile; Church of God (Cleveland, TN); Life Church, Boise, and Pastors Alan Church and Mark Boer; Christian Motorcyclist Ass’n.; parishioners on Butte View Drive.

**For the poor:** ground beef, chicken, bacon, fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cooking oil, pancake mix, syrup, spices, diapers, baby wipes, toilet paper, personal care items (soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream).

**(Sermon, cont’d.)** or behind you, then love takes on a whole different perspective. . . . (T)hink about the wonderful and beautiful people who sit to your right and to your left. . . . (V)isualize those who sit behind you and in front of you. These persons are not generic others. They are the specific men, women and children God has placed in your life, and your decision to love these specific people in this specific place will demonstrate to the world that you truly love Jesus and truly desire to follow to follow him. . . . (R)eceive Christ’s love to you at the Table.” Then love each other in the same manner as Christ has.