April 1, 2021 Lenten Devotional
John 13:31-35 – “The New Commandment”
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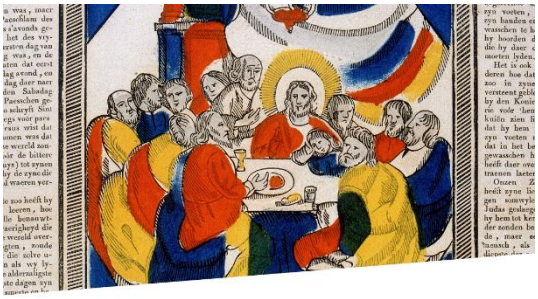
When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’ -John 13:31-35



Reflection

In this passage, Jesus gives his disciples a new command with three main components. The first, Love One Another. Three simple words. Seems easy enough, right? Well, if you pay any attention to the news, to society, and those around you, you will find that that is not the case. Human beings are inherently and fundamentally flawed. We are beautiful creatures with the capacity to love and to fight. We are a rich and diverse species, but, unfortunately, this diversity often leads to conflict, division, and violence. When Jesus gave this new command to his disciples, he too was dealing with his fair share of division and violence. He was constantly ostracized by people of his own community for his teachings, and he was just moments away from being betrayed, denied, beaten and crucified. And yet, “Love one another.” And, more specifically, the second component, he tells them to love each other “Just as I have loved you.” So, what does that look like? Well, during his ministry, Jesus demonstrated radical, passionate, counter-cultural love to every person he encountered, male or female, rich or poor, healthy or sick. Jesus did not discriminate. He invited a tax collector to be a disciple; he healed a leper; he pardoned an adulterous woman from being stoned. But Jesus’ love does not stop there. Jesus spoke up against the pharisees who were persecuting people. He calls them hypocrites and exposes them for masquerading as righteous while dominating and persecuting others in God’s name. This is how Jesus loved. The third and final part of his commandment, “your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” This final part can be tough to hear. Today, I have come across so many people who have been burned by The Church; maybe they felt judged for their sins or were not accepted because of their identity. Whatever the case, they associate the word “Christian” with Hate. We, as The Church, must do better. We must love each other like Jesus loves us. We must love those who the world deems unlovable and fight for those who the world has discriminated against. This is how the world will know we are God’s disciples. I’d like to leave you with a hymn that many of you are likely familiar with. I grew up hearing it at home, at church, at summer camp, etc. And it beautifully sums up the sentiments of this passage. *“We Are One in the Spirit”* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bL5bT_Ezeq8