

John 13: 31-35 "When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little 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.' ³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Sermon: "Love One Another"

Christ's past action empowers all of our future action. The one time event of ultimate love, the crucifixion and resurrection, empowers the followers of Christ to love one another presently and into the future. This one event of Christ's love is the ultimate power of cause and effect. The love Jesus showed for us 2000 years ago is the reason we can and

will love one another again and again. It is the most simple and profound command from Christ. It is simply kept and simply easy to break, too. It gives us courage and strength, patience and hope, the perfect example of grace. Lou Holtz, the football coach, said, the people who need love the most are often the ones hardest to love.

Mark Lowry, a Christian comedian, says he was a difficult and hyperactive child. He was a handful for his mother, teachers, and Sunday school teachers. Every night after prayers he said his mom would tell him, “God is gonna use you.” He says, “I don’t if she believed but she said it.” In elementary school he had a teacher, Mrs. Holland. When Mark was rowdy in class, Mrs. Holland would say Mark let’s go for a walk. The teacher’s assistant would take over the class and Mrs. Holland would take him by the hand and walk him around the school yard. One day she said, “Mark God likes hyperactive children.’

Mark was blown away. He said I have never heard anyone say that God liked me before. I have always heard that God loves me but that is God's job. We never hear that God likes us. He says, we know a lot people we love but don't like. He says, "He has been through Thanksgiving and Christmas just like everybody else. Don't pretend to not know. You know who he is talking about. You are going to cry at there funeral but you are not going on vacation together."

Jesus says, "Love one another." And we think well I can love my neighbor that I like. But Jesus do I have to love the ones I don't like?

Jesus yes, "Yes! Love one another as I have loved you."

"But you're Jesus. You have to love us. What about that lady that sat in my pew last week and the week before that so that I had to come to church ten minutes early to save our seat? I don't have to love her do I? I still acted like I like her."

“Love one another.”

Okay what about the kid who robbed the elderly lady down the block and set the old abandoned building on fire. Do I have to love him?

“Love one another”

“Politicians?”

“Love one another.”

“Telemarketers?”

“Hmmm, let me think about it.....Love one another.”

One pastor argues that we might be tempted to disagree that this is such a simple commandment. All you and I have to do is open the morning newspaper and scan the headlines to come to the conclusion that we do not live in a place where love abounds. Wars rage on with little sign of stopping. Poverty and hunger claim the lives of so many

while others live in comfort with way more than enough. Many are unsafe even in their own homes, while others enjoy the security of gates and fences. These are not the signs that love overflows in the world. In fact, if Jesus himself called on our phone with a new offer for a better life we might be tempted to ask him to take us off the list.

One of the greatest problems facing America today is political anger according to Rev. Nathan Baxter. He asks, “What can we, as Christians, in our various faith communities, contribute to a society which is bitterly divided on so many issues? Some scholars and community leaders worry that we are so deeply divided that violence may become a more common response to conflict than nonviolent protest, civil disobedience or traditional forms of negotiation. However, Baxter continues, this also can be a time of great opportunity for the

Christian church to witness, but perhaps not in the way in which we might think. Our greatest witness may not be in taking one position or another. Like the world around us, the Christian church is divided on many of the same issues -- abortion, euthanasia, sexual orientation, race and constitutional issues such as school prayer, to name a few. I do not think there will be easy or immediate answers to these questions for the Church or society.

But I do believe that in the midst of such difficult times there is a contribution that we can make. As the Apostle Paul says in letter to the Corinthians, we can show "a more excellent way to live." We can demonstrate how to deal with differences while maintaining a sense of community. We can engage in deeply felt conflict without destroying one another.

Baxter explains how The Apostle Paul explains the more excellent way: As though addressing charismatic Christian leaders or, in my understanding, politicians for us today, Paul says, "If I speak in human or angelic tongues, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal." As though addressing evangelical Christians or cable news for us: "I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing." And then social Gospel activist Christians: "I dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, if I only seek self-righteousness, I am none the better. There are three things that last for ever, faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love." Baxter says, Yes, I believe the more excellent way is love -- not necessarily a warm fuzzy feeling, but a Godly respect; a respect born of an understanding that others in the community are

persons who are loved and even liked by God even though we may freely disagree with them or even if they are difficult to love. We can contribute a positive affect by upholding scriptures that bind us together. "Love one another."

A three year old little girl's dad was tucking her into bed and he asked what she would like to pray about. Promptly she answered: "onions." They prayed about onions and the next morning he asked why she wanted to pray about onions. "Because the preacher said in the sermon that we should pray for things we don't like." One of the ironies of the commandment "Love one another" is that often Christians are known, not for loving one another, but for being divided and not liking one another. The history of Christian warfare against other Christians is

a bloody history. So this saying, “Love one another” has profound political as well as spiritual implications.

Someone asked me the other night, “How do you like the ministry?” I said, “I think I have the best job in the world. Jesus said love one another and I get to see that in action almost everyday. My job, my calling, is to look for the love of Christ and point it out and say see: there it is. After getting to know you all for a few months I get the feeling that God not only loves us but God likes us. The calling of the church is to recreate a place where love abounds. When we see the trouble in world, in our community, in our own lives, we know we have a better a way exemplified and empowered by Christ. Christ not only loves us but Christ likes us because we choose to take someone by the hand and love one another. Amen.

