

Sermon – May 15, 2022 – Easter 5 Year C

I 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.”

Love One Another. That is Jesus’ new commandment. It brings to mind the Beatles’ famous song ‘All You Need is Love’, remember? It echoes Jesus’ commandment. It was the time of ‘flower power’, ‘peace and love’...John Lennon and Yoko Ono and their ‘bed in’ to ‘Give Peace a Chance’. The words of All You Need is Love were intentionally simple to appeal to the international audience as the song was Britain's contribution to Our World, the first live global television link. The programme was broadcast via satellite and seen by an audience of over 400 million in 25 countries. Here’s a little bit of it.

https://youtu.be/t5ze_e4R9QY

And then another song came to mind ‘Get Together’ The song is an appeal for peace and brotherhood, presenting the polarity of love versus fear, and the choice to be made between them. It is best remembered for the impassioned plea in the lines of its refrain ("Come on people now/Smile on your brother/Everybody get together/Try to love one another right now"), which is repeated several times in succession to bring the song to its conclusion. Here is a bit.

Another song from that era is ‘What the World Needs Now Is Love Sweet Love’...do you remember that one? Written by Burt Bacharach and performed by Dionne Warwick...let’s hear it

<https://youtu.be/FfHAs9cdTqg>

More impassioned pleas– we need love sweet love and it’s the only thing there’s too little of...not just for some but for everyone! But how?

The Beatles in their song say it's easy. But is it? We suspect, even know deeply that it isn't easy to love...not always.

In any community, anytime you get a group of people together, there will be disagreements; there will be frictions; there will be personality clashes; even in churches, especially in churches!

So how do we do it?

How can Jesus command us to love one another?

The new commandment is not entirely new. In Leviticus, in the Old Testament, it says,

"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people,

but you shall love your neighbor as yourself..."

What, then, is new about Jesus' commandment?

First, Jesus provides a model of the love he requires:

"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" To understand Christian love, we have only to look at Jesus' life and actions. He ate and drank with outcasts and sinners. Just before giving the new commandment, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, demonstrating the humble service, the self-emptying service that Jesus asks his disciples to offer each other.

Second, this new commandment is positive and open-ended.

Rather than focusing on "Thou shalt not," it says, "thou shalt".

Where many Old Testament laws were very specific, this law is very broad. We can never claim full success. When have we loved enough? There is always need for more love as the song says. People could respond to the old law with a bookkeeper's mindset. Not so with this new commandment!

The focus is on loving action rather than loving feelings. In his own life, Jesus translates love into action that benefits the beloved. He calls us to do the same.

While it might be impossible to feel affection for some people, it is not impossible to help them. Our action-love is a gift of Christ, who loved us, and showed us how love behaves. He makes us new people born again in his image and capable of loving with his love. We can truly obey this commandment when "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live ...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me". That was a quotation from Galatians 2:20.

— Frederick Buechner (a famous minister/author) writes:

Loving each other doesn't mean

loving each other in some sentimental, unrealistic, greeting-card kind of way

but the way families love each other

even though they may fight tooth and nail

and get fed up to the teeth with each other

and drive each other crazy

and yet all the time know deep down in their hearts

that they belong to each other and need each other...

even the ones they often wish had never been born.

Jesus says, "Love one another." He wasn't calling his disciples to feel affection, but to act in loving ways.

When Jesus calls us to love one another, he is calling us to love the sweet lady who bakes for the church -- but he is also calling us to love the person who wounded us with their sharp tongue.

When Jesus calls us to love one another, he is calling us to love those we chat with at coffee hour -- but he is also calling us to love the person who opposes our pet project.

When Jesus calls us to love one another, he is calling us to love our favourite friends -- but he is also calling us to love the person who talks about us behind our back.

When Jesus calls us to love one another, he is calling us to love the soprano whose solo touches our hearts -- but he is also calling us to love the person who is outside our doors, living on the fringe, possibly with mental illness and addictions.

It is sinners God loves

-- that is, those who in disobedience and rebellion have turned away from him.

"Love one another," Jesus says.

It is more than a saying -- it is a commandment -- an order. It is the way that we spread faith in Christ. People can ignore almost anything we say, but they cannot ignore our love.

C. S. Lewis, author of the 'Chronicles of Narnia', advocates love as an act of the will.

Do not waste time wondering whether you "love" another, he suggests, act as if you do.

"As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets.

When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote:

Whom you would change,
you must first love.

Audrey Hepburn wrote this, read at her funeral years later. People, even more than things, have to be stored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed; never throw out anyone. 'never throw out anyone' ...people need to be redeemed... they need God's love through you.

Are there people you are tempted to throw out?

Isn't it these people, Christ is calling you and me to love today?

What is he be calling you and me to do about it? Amen



[YOUTUBE.COM](https://www.youtube.com)

Dionne Warwick - What The World Needs Now (1966)