

## **“I want it too” John 13:1-17, 31-35**

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:1-17)

Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

I know that it is not the easiest or the most pleasant thing to do, but imagine, imagine that tomorrow would be your last day. Tomorrow you would die. Besides, imagine that that's not the biggest worry.

It wouldn't be just any death, it would be the death on the cross. The most painful and excruciating death known to men. How would you spend your last evening? What would you do? What would be your main concerns?

I pray that we would never find the answers to these questions. However, we know exactly what Jesus was doing on the evening before His crucifixion, and where His focus was. We just read about it.

Let's listen to it once more: "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father ... knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God... having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."

What did strike you in these words? Sure, there are many things. But what about these words? "Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God..."

We know that Matthew concludes His Gospel account by quoting Jesus, that all the authority in heavens and on earth are given to Him, but here, Jesus says the same thing even before He is captured, tried and murdered.

See, Jesus wasn't just aware that the next day He will be crucified. In fact, He had all the power to avoid it. But no... He chose to die. He chose to give up His life. He chose to love His own to the end, and as He said later in that evening:

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) This is exactly what Jesus chose to do. By the way, you too are His own, you too are His friends. What He did, He did it for you too.

Think about it this way. The apostles were ordinary people, just like us. If we were there on that night, Jesus would have served us in His incredibly humble way, the same as He did to the Twelve.

But why did He do that? Why to humble Himself so much? Jesus Himself explains it: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [...] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Of course, Jesus did this because of His love towards us. That was how He showed His love to us. But He also gave us an example, He calls it a new commandment, – just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another.

Today the word 'love' has been so much abused that we may struggle to understand what Jesus means. Today 'to love' may have all kinds of meanings, from 'being nice', and 'being tolerant', that is, being indifferent, to different shades of sexual meaning.

All these are easy. They don't require anything from us. But this is not what Jesus meant. Love one another just as I have loved you. Jesus set aside His interests, He considered us as more significant, He cared for us first, He sacrificed His benefits for our sake. Finally, He literally gave up His life for us. This is what Jesus means with "love one another".

How are we doing with loving one another? This is a very important question. Why? Because when Jesus gave this new commandment, He also explained why we need to love one another.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Do you see, what He is saying? He is saying that how we, Christians, treat one another has importance not only for us, but for the rest of the world.

If we love one another just as Jesus loved us, all people will know that we are Jesus’ disciples. This is very important. We are praying for opportunities to reach those who don’t know Jesus yet, by ask yourself, how attractive are we?

You know how Jesus speaks about us. He calls us His brothers and His sisters. This is who you are. You are members, true members of Jesus family. How do we call God, the Father of Jesus? That’s right we call Him our Father. And that is who He is for us, He is your true and loving Father.

The Holy Spirit uses this family language talking about our relationships with God and among ourselves. Do you know why? It is not because our relationships with our brothers and sisters, or fathers are always the best ones.

You will know it from your own experience, that there are very different fathers, and even the best of them are very, very far from the ideal. The same is true with brothers and sisters, they can be very different. Our relationships with them can be very different. Sometimes even good.

The reason that the Holy Spirit uses this language is to show us what our relationships are supposed to be. Jesus gives us His example. Love. Love as care for others. Love as treating others as more significant. Love as sacrificing self for the sake of others. How are we going with that?

I’ll tell you a story that I heard when I arrived in Barossa. There was a young woman. She came from a normal Australian family. Her family had lived together, and they had survived one another. Then she met this young man.

He was different. His family was different. She wasn’t used to it. They loved one another. They treated one another with respect. There was something among them that she couldn’t fully understand. But she loved it, it was so attractive, that she said to herself – I don’t know yet what it is, but I want it.

So, she got married to the young man. She learned the secret of his family. It was nothing else that ordinary Christians trying to love one another as Jesus had loved them. They were not perfect. Not at all. But they tried to follow Jesus’ example. This young woman became a Christian. She lives among us, and she has been a great blessing to so many in Barossa.

Do we love one another as Jesus loved and loves us? It is so important, because if we do, people will see it, for genuine love is attractive, every heart longs for it. Every soul is looking for it. If we do what Jesus commanded, all people will

know who we are, and, what is more important, – they may have a chance to know who Jesus is.

“Jesus loves us, this we know... for the Bible tells us so.” But how do we love one another? It may not be that easy, but we need to begin with the people that are the closest in our lives. The catch is that they can be the hardest to love.

Christian love has many shapes. If husbands will try to love their wives as Christ did, being ready to die for them, and if wives will try to respect their husbands with the respect that is due to Jesus, that will be a big thing. The world doesn't know how to do it.

If we all obeyed parents and those in authority, not only when we agree with them, or like them, but showing them honour as to the people whom God has entrusted to care for us. That would be a big thing.

If those in positions of authority cared for those entrusted to their care, not just outwardly but as if they did it for Christ, that would be a big deal.

Luther had this beautiful suggestion. Treat all people in your life the way you would treat Jesus Himself, and try to love them the way Jesus would have loved them, so that when they see you, they could see Jesus in you.

This is what Jesus commands us. When we hear it, we may be excited and even willing to do it. But you know that it may not be that easy with real people. With broken people. With imperfect people. With arrogant people.

It is not easy, but the good news is that we have the same resources that Jesus had when He showed His love to us. You have come from the Father. He has chosen you before the creation of the world.

He also has given you the same Spirit in whose power Jesus served us. He has given us everything that He had given Jesus. He had made you co-heirs with Jesus. His Kingdom is yours to inherit. And you are going to Him as Jesus did.

And the last thing, but by no means the least. You don't have to go to the cross. That part Jesus took upon Himself, and that is finished. I know that from time to time we all may have doubts about these divine promises.

Jesus knew it as well, this is, why on the last evening He made the new covenant. Covenant is a very strong word. By making this covenant God made His promises to His own unbreakable.

Remember the words “given for you”, “shed for the forgiveness of sins”, “do this in remembrance of me”. When you obey the command of Jesus and receive the Holy Sacrament, you receive what the Holy God has promised, – the forgiveness of your sins, and where there is forgiveness, there is also eternal life.

Every time when you receive Jesus' body and blood in the Sacrament, you are assured in the most profound way, that you, yes, you receive God forgiveness, and His Spirit and the life with Him forever. This is most certainly true.

We are so blessed. You are loved, by Jesus and by the Father, and the Holy Spirit dwells with you and in you. You have everything you need to love others as Jesus loves you.

I pray that this evening as you receive the body and blood of our dear Jesus, the Holy Spirit strengthen you and enable you to love one another as Jesus does for us. So that when people look at us, at our lives and our relationships in our families and in our congregation, they would say: "I don't know yet, what is their secret, but I want it too." Amen.