

5th Sunday of Easter May 2nd, 2010

NIV John 13: 34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for the glory you brought to your father by your willing obedience, even to death on the cross. Send your Spirit among us today so that we might not lose hope because we cannot see you now. Move us with your love to live like the saints we are by your grace.

Introduction: Have you ever heard the story of Astor's Treasure Cave? Right here in Wisconsin in Crawford County, just outside Prairie du Chien my old stomping grounds along the bluffs of the Mississippi, they say lay a cave filled with French gold coins. The story goes that John Jacob Astor was a fur trapper. In 1809 he started the American Fur Trade Company to compete with the Hudson Bay Company. Astor ran keelboats from St. Louis up to Prairie du Chien to pick up furs to sell back in St. Louis. Well, the story goes that one boat on its way up the Mississippi, filled with French gold coins after a fur run, ran into some Sauk Native Americans. The captain ran the boat aground, grabbed the gold and hiked up 200 feet from the river along the bluffs and found a cave. He ditched the gold coins in the cave and sealed it up. His plan was to come back in a couple days and get the gold coins. When he and his crew returned they found that they sealed the cave too well. The boulders had fallen around the cave and it was impossible to enter it. In 1924 the Milwaukee Journal sentinel even reported on treasure hunters clearing the bluffs searching for Astor's Treasure Cave. So before you start planning a vacation for the family to beautiful Prairie du Chien along the Mississippi, I want to tell you that you need not travel anywhere to find a lost treasure. We find it in our text for today – Can you see it? It's right in front of your face! "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." That's no treasure, pastor. Give me the next 15 minutes to "Recover the treasure" of the New Command:

Recover the Treasure of the New Command:

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

- 1) The Glory of the Gospel
- 2) The Disciples of the Savior's love

1) The Glory of the Gospel

31 When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

The stage is set. Jesus and his disciples are in the upper room; Jesus reaches out to Judas one last time. Judas refuses to heed Jesus' words and he leaves. That night was filled with earth shattering changing words from our Lord. From his confrontation with Judas' betrayal to His prophetic words about Peter's denial, the disciples were distraught to say the least. On this same night Jesus has also shown them great love by washing their feet. The whole night is filled with words and events the disciples just do not comprehend. Jesus then takes the bread and the wine and says, "Take and eat, this is my body. Take and drink, this is my blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." The disciples must have been emotionally and mentally drained as they now heard Jesus say – "What you are about to do, do quickly. "Since Judas was in charge of the money, the disciples thought maybe he was giving money to the poor or preparing for the rest of Passover week. All that Jesus told them. All that was going on that night. The disciples were confused and in the dark about what were now going to take place and take place quickly! The suffering death and resurrection of the Savior.

Jesus told them now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that at this time, at that moment, the culmination of 1000 of years of waiting, planning, promising was to come to an end. Now the time for talk was over. It is the time for action. The battle for the souls of the world had begun. The suffering and death of Jesus Christ would bring him glory. The suffering and death of Jesus is what makes him so very precious and valuable to us and the world of sinners. The span of salvation from the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve to us today has always been all about God. He thought of the plan, he carried out the plan and he finished the plan. He is the author and the perfecter of our salvation. Not only was it time for Jesus to be glorified by his suffering and death and thereby honoring and glorifying God the Father, but also God the Father will glorify his son soon after his suffering and death: the resurrection.

God the Father watched the action of His Son, innocently suffering for a world of sinners, even suffering abandonment by His God. God the Father then put his stamp of approval on his Son's work of salvation and raised him from the dead on that third day after his death.

The greatness of Jesus Christ, His glory is nothing more and nothing less than the Gospel. The Gospel is the glory of God. Jesus told his disciples that as much as they wanted to they could not follow him to the cross, into death and out again. He alone could follow the plan of salvation. The disciples cannot go with him. The plan called for a substitute, someone who had holiness (perfection) and someone who did not have any sins. They could not follow in his footsteps any longer. Jesus would be their substitute – where they could not go, he would go for them. No one could ever walk in Jesus' sandals. John the Baptist even said that he wasn't worthy to untie his sandals let alone walk in them.

Today, we uncover the lost treasure of the new command because it finds its source in the great glory of the gospel. The gospel is not about human acts, human decisions, commitments, good tries and attempts. The Glory of the Gospel is the substitution of Jesus Christ to live perfectly, die innocently and be raised to life on the third day by God the Father. That is the treasure we discover today in the new command. It begins, "AS I have loved you..." We cannot follow him to the cross, to the tomb and out again into heaven. It is impossible for us sinners. Sinfulness clings to our bones like a bad stench. We needed a substitute and Christ brought glory to himself and to his God by being that substitute.

2) The disciples of Jesus' Love

35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The time for Salvation, Jesus suffering and death and resurrection changed everything. Now the disciples could no longer live up to their name – followers of Jesus". They simply could not, were unable and were not allowed to follow Jesus to the cross. Instead Jesus changed forever what it meant to be a disciple, a follower of his with just one short sentence. "AS I have loved you, so you must love one another." Instead of trying to keep up with Jesus and walking in his footsteps, which would be impossible for all mortal sinners, instead they were to be disciple's of His love.

In summarizing the commandments of the Old Testament, Jesus said..."Do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the prophets." (Matt 7:12/Luke 6:31) It is the golden rule – Love your neighbor as yourself - a correct summation of the 10 commandments. If we were to look closely at the golden rule, where does it ask us to search for obedience? If I want to answer the question, what should I do? What is right or wrong? Where do I look? Isn't it my own selfishness or desires? For example, I'm walking over to church and I see my daughter slip and fall on her backside. What should I do? Where do I turn for the answer? My own wants and desires, right? Or maybe God's threats and punishments on those who disobey his commands have treated others like you. I don't want to be laughed at and I don't want to be punished by God. Both of those reasons are selfish. It's all about me and what I want.

At the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus that was to change forever. Disciples, followers of God are no longer to be selfish based and look to threats and punishments. Instead they are to be students of His love. They are to focus on what Jesus did in love for them and for all sinners. That is the focus of being a disciple, students of Jesus' love. Memorize His love. Read about His love. Trace in History His Love from the beginning to the end of time. Disciples are to be all about knowing how Jesus loved us sinners. And then the treasure of the glory of God takes on an extra above and beyond quality that the world has never seen in this proportion. The power of Jesus love for his disciples empowers them to love the same way.

Jesus love was first and foremost for his Father – he lived obediently and even died obediently to His Father's plan. Jesus' love was one sided. He loved the unlovable, even his enemies. Jesus' love was pure with no ulterior motives, no strings attached. Truth and love always go together. The truth is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is true. Where the Word of God, the message of Christ is being studied, read, learned, memorized, love is found among His disciples.

Many of you know that I make a big point about must, have to and should when it comes to believers in Jesus Christ. The old way was all about have to, because it focused on our sinful nature and selfishness. That part only listens to threats and punishment, like a stubborn mule and sadly we as believers still have a sinful nature so we still need to paddle it and keep it under control with have to's and must. But as students of Jesus' love we focus on what he has done for us. We know the ins and outs of his love for us now, in the past and even into the future we know about his upcoming loving blessings. We don't have to love the Lord and love like him. We want to and consider it pure joy to serve him and our fellow believers.

The real treasure is not along the bluffs of the Mississippi in a hidden cave. Right here in our hearts the faith and knowledge that we have of the glory of Jesus – his life, death and resurrection for us. The love of Jesus for you and me fills and empowers us to stop fretting and worrying about our own selfish wants and desires and to love Him and love each other as he has loved us. Use the treasure of the new command everyday: As I have loved you...love one another.