

John 13:31-35

Is there a particular **trait** which is common to **all** the members in your family? If so, what kind of a trait **is** it? Is it something **physical**, something **emotional**, or perhaps something **spiritual**? In **our** family the prevalent **physical** traits are blond hair and blue eyes, and the **spiritual** trait would be our common **faith** in the Savior. Emotions? Well, they run all over the place. But anyway, the reason I started out the sermon today talking about **traits**, is that there is **one** trait which is common to all **three** areas - spanning the physical, emotional, **and** spiritual realms of life. That trait is **love**. In our text for today, Jesus gave His disciples a new command - the command to **Love One Another**. And as we look at our text, we're going to see love **expressed** in a number of different ways. There is the love of the Heavenly Father toward us, the love of Jesus toward the Heavenly Father, the love of Jesus toward **all** people (but **especially** toward His disciples), and finally **our** love for one another.

Our text begins, "*When **he** was gone, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will glorify the Son in Himself, and will glorify Him at once.'*" In order to see the love of the Heavenly Father toward **us** in these words, it is important for us to understand who the person is at the **beginning** of our text - the one who had just **left**. That person was **Judas Iscariot**. It was Maundy Thursday evening, and Judas had just left the upper room where Jesus was celebrating the Passover together with His disciples for the last time. Judas was on his way to **betray** Jesus into the hands of His **enemies**. The final wheels were being set into motion - wheels which would bring about the events leading up to Jesus' **death**. That's where the Father showed His love toward **us** - by sending His Son to bring about our **salvation** through His death on the cross. Through the death of **Jesus**, God would shelter all mankind from His **wrath** against **sin**. God's eternal plan of salvation for the world was the **ultimate** expression of His love, and that plan was **rapidly** drawing to its conclusion.

At the same time that the Father was showing His love toward **us**, Jesus was showing **His** love toward the Heavenly **Father**. Through His perfect and willing **obedience** to the will of the Father, Jesus was **glorified**. And through that **same** obedience, Jesus also glorified His **Father**. The actions of **children** always place a **reflection** on their parents - whether **good** or **bad**. Let's look for a moment at the relationship between children and their parents. Parents **love** their children, and when children **return** that love as they carry out the **wishes** of their parents - by

cooperating with their brothers and sisters, doing their homework well, keeping their room clean, and completing their other household chores without complaining - their parents are **pleased**. And when others **see** such things happening, not only do those **children** receive praise, but so do their **parents**. When somebody tells a parent what **nice, well-behaved** children they have, the parent probably **qualifies** the compliment saying something like, “Well, thank you, but they’re not **always** so good. They have their **bad** moments too.” Yet, on the **inside**, you can be sure that parent is **bursting** with good feelings. We can only **imagine** how wonderful God the Father must feel, knowing that Jesus, His Son, always carries out the will of His Father **perfectly**.

Our text continues as Jesus said, “*My **children**, I will be with you only a little longer. You will **look** for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.*” Here Jesus addresses His disciples as His **children** - a term of **endearment**. Jesus is speaking some of His **last words** to His disciples prior to His **death**, so He’s behaving somewhat like a parent who’s first child is heading off to **college**, or who is perhaps getting **married**. You **know** that you’ll still be in **touch** with them, but your relationship will never be quite the **same** again. Jesus realized that Gethsemane and Golgotha were both only a matter of hours away. Very soon, He would be **leaving** His disciples, in the normal, physical sense. He wouldn’t **be** there to have those little heart-to-heart talks - He wouldn’t **be** there to answer their questions and offer advice - He wouldn’t **be** there to take them in His loving arms when they were confused and hurt. As a **true man**, Jesus understood how **important** that kind of a relationship is. So, Jesus wanted to make sure that His **disciples** understood that since they would no longer be able to experience that closeness with **Him**, they would have to depend on **one another**.

Therefore Jesus said, “*A new command I give you: **Love One Another**. As I have loved you, so you must **Love One Another**.*” There is nothing **new** about the command to **Love One Another**. Fifteen hundred years earlier God had given Moses the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. The first three of them focus on our love toward **God**, while the last **seven** urge us to **Love One Another**. The **new** part, and the **difficult** part of this command from Jesus, is that we are to **Love One Another** as He has loved us! When Jesus was **denied** by Peter, Jesus **loved** him. When Jesus was **betrayed** by Judas, Jesus **loved** him. When Jesus was **hated, scorned, and despised** by His enemies, He **loved** them. In fact, He loved them **so much** that He laid down His **life** for them.

How do you and I react when we have been **betrayed, denied, scorned, hated, and despised** by others? Don't we immediately raise our **defenses**, and then seek to find a way to **strike back**? We're not going to let anyone gain the upper **hand** or get the best of **us**. We don't **deserve** to be treated that way, and we're not going to **stand** for it. We'll yell, and fight, and kick, and bite - but we won't **give up** - at least not without gaining some kind of **satisfaction**.

Does that sound familiar? The devil, the world, and our flesh have done a very **thorough** job on us. We need to be **reminded** that Jesus said, "*Love One Another as I have loved you.*" We have His **command**, and we have His **example**. Now all we have to do is **incorporate** them into our **lives**, because Jesus went **on** to say, "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you Love One Another.*" In good times and in bad, Christians need to **be there** for each other. Just as the love of **Jesus** is **constant** and self-**sacrificing**, never **vengeful** and always **caring** - in the same way **we** are to **Love One Another**. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesians, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her ... Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord ... Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right ... Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord ...*" and finally "*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way.*"

Whether we are fathers or mothers, sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, employers or employees; we are all **children of God** through faith in Christ Jesus. And Jesus pleads with us to **Love One Another** for our own **good**, and for His **glory**. Love is the **distinguishing** trait of every Christian. It is a trait which we would all do well to **foster** in our families, in our congregation, and in our society. I can't tell you how much it **hurts** me, when I come home and hear my children **fighting** and **arguing** with each other instead of **working together** to solve their problems - or when I hear my wife **yelling** at them for something foolish they **did**, or for something important which they **refused** to do - or when I fly off the handle and rant and rave over something which is probably pretty trivial if I would just stop and **think** about it - or when I hear about **other** families who go through the same things - or when I hear about **members** of our congregation who can't seem to get along with each other - or when I hear about the **spite**, and **hate**, and **godlessness** which is so prevalent in the world around us. I can't tell you how much it hurts **me** - but I **can** tell you how much it hurts our **Savior**. It hurts Him **this much** (hold out arms as if being crucified). And even as He hung on the cross,

suffering the hurt for all **our** sins, Jesus **loved** us and **forgave** us.

My dear friends, this same Jesus has asked us to **Love One Another**, as He has loved us. May we go home today to live our lives in such a way, that everyone we encounter will know without a doubt that we are **disciples** of Jesus - disciples who are striving to **Love One Another** as He has loved us. Amen.