

## THE NEW COMMAND

John 13:18-38

Key Verses 13:34, 35

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

We thank God for giving us spiritual equipment through some special lessons at the beginning of the year 2021. May God bless our decision of life for the Word of God and use us as Bible teachers like Ezra for the spiritual revival of this generation. With today's service, we continue our study of the Gospel of John. In chapter 13, Jesus' farewell speech begins in the upper room. Last we had learned about Jesus' feet-washing love for his disciples. Jesus commanded the twelve to do to one another as he had done unto them. Today's text contains the further course of that eve before the Passover, the 14th of Nissan. At Jesus' table fellowship with his disciples, Jesus revealed to them that one among them would betray Jesus to the enemies. Jesus loved the disciples, including his betrayer, to the end and gave Judas room to repent. Today, let us personally accept Jesus' love to the end and his new command, so that we may form a spiritual koinonia and serve the young people with Jesus' true love and experience the work of spiritual revival.

### 1. Judas' betrayal (18-30)

Let us look at verse 18: "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.'" Jesus had given his disciples an example of servant love by washing their feet. For about three years Jesus devotedly served his disciples and lived a common life with them. In the process, the idiosyncra-

sies of each were revealed. Peter was often impulsive. John preferred to sit right next to Jesus, thinking that he was the disciple Jesus loved the most. Andrew had a beautiful faith. Philip was a person who could do math very well. Bartholomew dreamed often and Thaddeus sometimes hid. In any case, Jesus knew each one very well. He looked at each one with the vision and hope of God. Jesus had called them personally at the beginning of his ministry (Mark 3:13): "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him." Each of the disciples had their faults and weaknesses, but their greatness was their studious hearts and their personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus had chosen these twelve for His world redemption plan, that they would one day carry on His work and preach the Gospel to all the world. Yet Jesus also knew that one of the twelve did not have a pure motive. In John 6:70,71 Jesus said, „Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)" Jesus had clear insight and awareness of the problem that Judas was the one of whom even Scripture (in Psalm 41:10) foretold, "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me."

Humanly speaking, Judas was not worthy of Jesus calling him as His disciple in the first place. Jesus knew Judas through and through, how selfish and materialistic he was minded. In the previous chapter we had

come to know that it was said about Judas (John 12:6b) "...but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." Nevertheless, Jesus did not depose him, but remained faithful to the end. Judas was pursuing his own goal. He had already made a deal with Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees, to betray Jesus at the next opportunity (Matt. 26:14-16). Let's look at verse 19: "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He." Jesus said this so that the other disciples would be prepared when it happened.

Consider verse 21: "After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." It pained Jesus greatly that Judas was about to make the biggest mistake of his life. How did the other disciples react? Verse 22 says, "His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant." The disciples were pure in heart. They were personally affected and wholly unaware. They could not imagine betraying Jesus. Therefore, startled, they asked back, "Lord, is it I?" (Mt 26:22b).

This incident teaches us the importance of a personal love relationship with Jesus and a life decision to follow Him. Judas had followed Jesus for three years, as had the other eleven. But his motive was not pure. He was striving to achieve something for himself. He had never repented of his impure motive. So Satan could abuse him as his plaything. Jesus did his best to help Judas repent and give his undivided heart not to Satan but to Jesus.

Because of Jesus' word, the disciples, especially Peter, had now become very curious. Peter was eager to know exactly who Jesus had been talking about. When he saw that John was right next to Jesus at the meal, he beckoned to him that he should ask Jesus once about whom he had been talking. Let's look at verses 26,27: "Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in

the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him." Jesus was very delicate in his approach. He did not condemn Judas. Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to Judas. At that moment, the scales should have fallen from Judas' eyes that he had gone too far. Judas should have beaten his breast, repented and turned back from his evil plan. But he didn't. Verse 27 says that at that moment Satan entered into him. This is the most bitter and miserable moment when a person opens the heart door to Satan. There is a proverb that says, "If you give the devil your little finger, he'll take your whole hand right away." And in Genesis 4:7, God admonishes Cain, saying, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." We must not play with sin. By remembering the grace of God in our lives, we may reject Satan and rule over sin.

Verse 30 says, "As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night." Judas, despite Jesus' love to the end, remained stubborn and did not repent. This must have pained Jesus so much. Jesus was willing to accept Judas if he would repent and do penance. But the latter did not humble himself to the end and remained proud and unrepentant. Instead of coming to Jesus, he went out into the darkness of the night. Judas' betrayal is one of the saddest incidents in the Bible. Jesus had such great hope for all his disciples - including Judas. He ministered to them. He gave himself for their spiritual growth. He also loved Judas unconditionally to the end and gave him room to repent. But he stubbornly held on to his wrong goal in life. Thus he betrayed his beloved Master and went down in history as the person through whom Jesus was handed over to the enemies, finally captured, interrogated and crucified. The evangelist Mark testifies (14:21), "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of

Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

In this passage we learned about Jesus' love to the end. Judas did not repent until the end, but pursued his wrong goal in life and thus became Jesus' betrayer. Let us remember Jesus' love to the end and renew and deepen our love relationship with Jesus through repentance. Pray that through one-on-one Bible study teams, we may minister Jesus' love to the end to young people so that they may personally accept Jesus and make a life decision for Jesus.

## 2. Jesus' farewell speech and Peter's denial (31-38)

Let's look at verses 31-33: "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. "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. " In his farewell speech, Jesus gave two messages to the disciples.

First, now the Son of Man is glorified.

Judas' departure was so painful for Jesus. Yet Jesus did not despair because of it. Rather, Jesus believed in the sovereign counsel of God. He testified, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." Jesus was prepared. He knew what would happen the very next day. Jesus would be imprisoned, interrogated, mocked, condemned, and finally torturously sacrificed on the cross. But Jesus was already looking ahead to the glorious day of his resurrection. Both through suffering and death and through his resurrection on the third day, he would be glorified as the Son of Man, and God would be glorified through him.

Second: Love one another

The second message of Jesus is found in verses 34 and 35: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." After Judas' departure, the unity of the remaining disciples could very easily have broken down. But Jesus ministered to His disciples and gave them the new command that they were to love one another as Jesus had loved them even to this hour. The disciples had learned that Jesus loved each of them very personally. In John 15:13, Jesus testified, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." The disciples had experienced this true, spiritual love of Jesus up to this point. They had witnessed, for example, how Jesus did not send away a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus, in the middle of the night, but welcomed him, ministered to him spiritually, and taught him the necessity of spiritual rebirth. Later, after Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus was changed into a courageous disciple and clearly sided with the rejected Messiah.

Through the new command, Jesus encouraged his disciples to practice the selfless, sacrificial, and giving love Jesus experienced among themselves. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." There is no word in the world that is so often misunderstood and misused as the word "love." Jesus here meant by "love" neither a nice feeling nor a formal kindness. True love has a lot to do with devotion. Jesus spoke of self-giving, self-sacrificing love. John testified to this love of God in his word John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Let us read again Jesus' new command in verses 34 and 35: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Why did Jesus call this command a "new command"? Also in

the Old Testament, in Leviticus 19:18, God taught His people and said, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." But in the Old Testament, the standard of this command was man: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." But in the new command, Jesus himself is the standard: "...as I have loved you." Jesus' love for us human beings goes so far that he gave up his life completely and laid it down for us on the cross.

This love is beyond our imagination. How could God love me and you and us so much? No human being could love such a sinner as me! With my reckless self-love, pride, arrogance, lust and self-righteousness, I sinned against God and against people. But God did the inconceivable: he sent his only begotten Son Jesus, who is God, into this world and made him vicariously the sacrificial lamb. Through Jesus' prayer on the cross (Lk 23:34a): "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!" I was allowed to personally accept Jesus' unconditional and forgiving love for me, to repent and to make a new beginning in this love. Now I am allowed to learn this true love of Jesus throughout my life, for example, by serving the entrusted sheep until the end and building the prayer altar at the campus in the midst of this pandemic to prepare God's work.

Every person needs the true, self-giving and sacrificial love of Jesus. Without this love, no one can have peace with God. Rather, our conscience accuses us - and quite rightly so. We could not and cannot free ourselves from the enormous power of sin and all its consequences. We are completely helpless. Although we do not want to, we sin without ceasing. That is why I also cried out in my heart, "I wretched man. Who will deliver me from this body that is ruined by death?" Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the Savior and Messiah promised by God. In over 300 promises in the Old Testament, God announced Him through His prophets. The prophet

Isaiah says (Isa 53:5): "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Thanks be to God for His magnificent plan of salvation, which was fulfilled and completed in Jesus Christ. For this Jesus gave up all his heavenly glory and became the servant of us all. The evangelist Mark testifies (10:45), "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Thus we have been redeemed - without our merit - saved and justified through the Son. Now, in Jesus, we have the new life. This is not a continuation of the old life, but we have become a new creature. Apostle Paul describes in Titus 3:3-8 how wretched we were under sin and what we have now become in Christ: "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

With our new life, we serve God and practice Jesus' new command. In the midst of a fallen sinful world where we are misunderstood, persecuted and slandered, we stand together as Jesus' disciples because we have received Jesus' new command. We may obey Jesus' new command by not fighting against people but giving our all for the salvation of lost sinners. We have the privilege of forming 10,000 one-on-one Bible study teams so that young people will meet Jesus, hear His message of salvation,

and accept Him as Savior and Redeemer. At this time, we are experiencing how among us some servants of God are selflessly giving themselves for the spiritual growth of the Next Generation, whether through Daily Bread and Word Fellowship, Leadership Seminars, GLEF and QMW. We all have the precious privilege of serving the young people on campus and our Next Generation with our new lives through prayer and the Word of God. We have the privilege of going out into all the world with Jesus' Great Commission and raising up disciples of Jesus among all peoples. We have the privilege of conquering 1,700 universities in Germany and Europe with the gospel of Jesus and establishing three bases for revival work in the Muslim world. Yes, we have the privilege of practicing Jesus' new command on a daily basis by forming a spiritual koinonia and loving each other as Jesus loved us so that everyone will know that we are His disciples.

In the Old Testament we find the incident of Absalom, King David's third son. Although he was so loved by his father, he tried to overthrow him. His self-absorption eventually led him to his downfall. But in contrast, we find the heroes of David. The first three of his heroes (Ishbaal, Eleazar, Shammah) risked their lives by breaking into the camp of the enemy Philistines and drawing water from the well at the gate in Bethlehem. When they brought it to David, he refused to drink it, but poured it out as an offering to the LORD. In such devotion we see the true and pure love of these heroes.

Let us always remember anew the love and saving grace of our Lord Jesus, who saved us from the cursed life under sin and bought us dearly with His blood. We were cursed under the power of sin and had to be judged and condemned. But Jesus, in His sacrificial love, gave Himself up for us on the cross without rest. Thus we received the new life with which we may serve Jesus. This new life is God's work of creation. And this life cannot remain hidden from the world. As Jesus promised, "By this everyone will know

that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

God has blessed the Herrnhut Brethren Church in the past and used it precious for his world mission work. The starting point was a historic communion celebration on August 13, 1727. There was a spiritual restoration through the work of the Holy Spirit. Before that, there had been many hopeless quarrels among the diverse believers in the small town. When Count Zinzendorf personally took care of all the brothers and sisters and had them come to the said communion, God's Spirit caused them to confess and forgive each other's sins. In a diary it was written, "We brought that day and the following day to a quiet and joyful frame and learned to love." To this day, the Brethren community considers this incident as its founding day.

Our community is also a life community of serving and giving love. Through our prayer and invitations on campus, we practice love for our neighbor. Forming a one-to-one Bible study team is the expression of our spiritual love for one sheep. Through our practical love for one another, we testify that we have left the old life of sin and have now become a new creature in Christ. Jesus also brought about such power of change in the lives of his disciples. Before Jesus' crucifixion, they were full of fear. They even ran away thinking they would be the next to be arrested and crucified. But Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection changed their lives. They finally understood God's plan of redemption and the deep meaning of Jesus' incarnation and death on the cross. And when Jesus rose from the dead and met them, they gained new confidence and courage. After Jesus' ascension, they went to Jerusalem. They practiced Jesus' new command daily by forming a koinonia of prayer and cooperation in the upper room. Acts 1:14 says, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." This beautiful spiritual koinonia of the disciples and women disciples of Jesus was the beginning of the first Christian

community. It was, so to speak, the beginning of "Jerusalem Bible Friendship." The love of Christ to the end ruled their hearts. So they could work together with one accord and also forgive each other their faults and weaknesses. The first church came into being, in the original Greek text: "Ekklesia" (literally: "the called out ones"). Called out of the old life of sin. Called out of a life according to the pattern of this world. Called out to serve the one Lord, Jesus Christ. Called out to form an influential mission-centered life community.

Let's look at how Peter responded to Jesus' farewell speech. Let's read verses 36-38: "Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" Peter still had to go through a hard trial. He thought that he could be faithful to his LORD until the end, even lay down his life for Him. But human loyalty has its limit. Peter was full of confidence. Jesus told him that the cock would not crow until Peter denied Him three times. He had to learn bitterly that his spirit was willing, but his flesh was weak, so that he could not stand on Jesus' side at the decisive moment. But Jesus had given him this word so that in the midst of defeat he could remember Jesus' promise and Jesus' unconditional love. When Peter denied Jesus, the scales fell from his eyes at what a miserable failure he was. He wept bitterly. His tears show that Peter repented and that he remembered the word and love of Jesus in the midst of his bitter defeat.

Here we see the great difference between Peter and Judas. Both had followed Jesus. Both had cooperated with him. And both had also betrayed Jesus. But Peter denied Jesus out of his fear and self-confidence, while Judas betrayed Jesus with evil intent and because of his impure motive and wrong purpose in life. Judas did not have a

word of Jesus in his heart. His repentance was not true repentance, but out of self-pity. He did not cry tears. Instead of coming back to Jesus, he went and hanged himself. But Peter remembered the word that Jesus had told him. He wept bitterly out of genuine repentance. He did not run away, but stayed with the disciples. After the resurrection, Jesus ministered to him so that Peter confessed his love for Jesus anew and was restored as Jesus' disciple.

Today we have learned about Jesus' love to the end for Judas, for the disciples, and also for us personally. With such love to the end, a house church has also been selflessly serving the work of God for over 40 years through Bible study, life fellowship and disciple-making ministry. Although they are so much misunderstood and slandered by godless and humanistic-minded people, they do not fight against their adversaries but obey the new command of Jesus day by day. Through their example, we may learn to form a holy koinonia among ourselves and practice Jesus' new command daily. Satan is always very envious and attacks where a vessel of Jesus' love is formed. Therefore, let us be spiritually vigilant and actively practice the new command. Let us read verses 34 and 35 together: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Let us actively practice Jesus' love for young people through forming one-on-one Bible study teams, life fellowship, disciple making, and also through the upcoming leadership master class. God bless our obedience to Jesus' new command this year, so that we form a koinonia of Christ's love that God uses as a starting point for the spiritual renewal and revival of Germany, Europe and into the Muslim world.