

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”(chapter 15:12)

These words, the words of the gospel reading today, were part of the final discourse between Jesus and his disciples: which we refer to as the Last Supper. The disciples were all together, celebrating the Feast of the Passover and, as the gospel describes, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and to go to his Father. So he got up and tied a towel around his waist and washed the disciples feet: including Judas. Shortly afterwards, Judas left; Jesus saying to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.”

So Judas missed Jesus’ teaching: his final discourse. This is a paraphrase of what Jesus tells his disciples; this is what Judas missed.

This version was written by an American preacher and I have found it very helpful. Jesus says:

“I love you with the same love that the Father loves me. You have what I have.

I give to you the joy that my Father and I share. You are part of us.

You are my joy, my life and my purpose.

I want your joy to be full, complete, whole and perfect.

You are my friends, my peers, my equals.

I have told you everything. Nothing is held back or kept secret.

I chose you. I picked you. I wanted you.

I appointed, ordained, commissioned, and sent you to bear fruit, to love another. I trust and believe you can do this.”

These are words for us today.

We are to be like Jesus: generous, forgiving and compassionate: able to love one another unconditionally. As Jesus was the true vine, so we are the branches and God is the grower of the vine.

To love one another is not a choice but a commandment.

As Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Obviously, this does not mean that we can wish to win the lottery, but that we do have a winning ticket to everlasting life through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

However, it comes with responsibilities. As Jesus says, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Does that mean loving the driver of the car that has just cut you up at the roundabout?

Does that mean loving the shopkeeper who has short-changed you?

Well, yes it does. Every Christian is commissioned to love and is appointed to love others. It is worth thinking about that the next time somebody jumps the queue in front of you!

We are called to love those who are difficult to love and to demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

Again, as Jesus said to his disciples, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name."

I am giving you these commands so that you may love one with another.

That is our commission too, today. To love; to care for each other: to put others in front of ourselves; to consider their needs, worries and concerns and to pray for them in Jesus' name. Amen

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