

Maundy Thursday (4/2/2026)

Sermon Title: The New Commandment: Love One Another

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On this holy night, Maundy Thursday, we stand at the threshold of the cross.

Tomorrow will be **Good Friday**, the day when Jesus offers himself as the ultimate sacrifice, freeing us from a slavery we could never escape on our own. But tonight... tonight is different. Tonight is quieter. More intimate. More unsettling.

Tonight, we enter an upper room in Jerusalem. A table is set. A meal is prepared. Before the meal, he washed his disciples' feet. Jesus had a lot to say to his disciples over that meal. At the table, he says, 'A NEW COMMANDMENT I give you.

1. The Meaning of Maundy: A New Commandment

A long time ago, people read the Bible in Latin. In Latin, 'new commandment' means 'mandatum novum'. 'Mandatum' means a commandment. "Maundy" comes from the Latin *mandatum novum*—"a new commandment."

And what is this new commandment?

"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." (John 13:34)

Now, this raises an important question.

Is this really new? Yes, that's new. The quality of love that he talks about in this new commandment is different from what he said earlier.

Jesus had already taught and made it clear that the greatest commandment is to love: to love God first, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. But Jesus isn't REMINDING his disciples of his most important instruction. He's giving them a new one! The new commandment adds something more to the previous commandment. It is more than to love God with all your heart. And it is more than to love your neighbor as yourself. It means that Jesus is not simply repeating an old commandment. He is **transforming it**.

2. The Old Commandment vs. The New Commandment

The old commandment says: Love your neighbor **as yourself**. This is profound. It calls for empathy, fairness, and moral responsibility.

But the new commandment says:

Love one another **as I have loved you**.

Do you see the difference?

- The old commandment is measured by **self-love**.
- The new commandment is measured by **Christ's love**.

And Christ's love is not moderate. It is not safe. It is not comfortable. It is **self-giving**, **sacrificial**, and **costly**. The standard has changed.

No longer: *"How would I want to be treated?"*

Now: *"How did Christ love me?"*

And the answer to that question leads us... to a basin... and to a cross.

3. The Basin: Love That Stoops Low

Before giving the commandment, Jesus does something shocking. He rises from the table. Wraps a towel around his waist. He begins to wash his disciples' feet. This is not just an act of kindness. This is **humiliation**.

In that culture, foot-washing was the work of the lowest servant.

And yet—the Lord and Teacher knelt down. He touches dust. He washes filth. He serves in silence.

And then he says: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

What kind of love is this?

It is:

- **humiliating**
- **demeaning**
- **messy**

And yet—it is **blessed**.

4. The Lamb: From Exodus to Christ

Now, to understand the fullness of this moment, we must go back... to **Exodus 12**.

There, on the night of Passover, God gives Israel instructions:

A lamb—

- without blemish
- carefully chosen

- prepared for slaughter

Its blood would be placed on the doorposts. Its flesh would be eaten. And that night, judgment would pass over them. That lamb was not just food. It was a **substitution**. It was **protection**. It was **deliverance**. The people were saved... through the sacrifice of the lamb.

Now I come back to the upper room.

The disciples are eating the **Passover meal**. But something has changed. Lamb is no longer just on the table. **The Lamb is at the table**. Jesus himself is the Lamb. As the Gospel of John declares:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

Just as the Passover lamb was:

- chosen
- prepared
- sacrificed

So too, Jesus:

- offers himself willingly,
- presents his own body, and becomes the sacrifice for all humanity. And even today, that sacrifice is not forgotten.

In the **Holy Eucharist**, we partake—not of a symbol alone—but of a mystery: Christ’s body given. Christ’s blood poured out. The Lamb is still present. The sacrifice is still life-giving.

5. The Cross: Love That Goes All the Way

Now we understand. The washing of the feet is not the ultimate act. It is a **sign**. A **living parable**. Because the true washing happens... at the cross. There, Jesus washes not feet—but souls. There, love becomes:

- more humiliating
- more demeaning
- more messy than we can imagine

Rejected.

Beaten.

Crucified.

This is how he loved us. And now he says:

“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

6. The Challenge: Loving Like Jesus

Let us be honest. This is not easy. To love like Jesus means:

- forgiving when it hurts
- serving without recognition
- giving without return
- entering into the mess of other people’s lives

It may mean being misunderstood. It may mean being taken for granted. It may even mean being wounded. This is not the love we naturally choose. But it is the love we are commanded to live.

7. The Blessing: Why It Is Worth It

And yet—Jesus makes a promise: “You will be blessed if you do these things.” Not comfortable. Not applauded. But **blessed**.

Because when we love like Jesus:

- we participate in his life
- we reflect on his grace
- we become signs of his kingdom

And one day...The washing will end. The suffering will cease.

And we will join him—not in the upper room of sorrow—

But at the **heavenly banquet of joy**.

Conclusion

Tonight, we remember: The Lamb who was prepared. The Lord who knelt. The Savior who died.

And the command he gave: Love one another... just as I have loved you. So go from this place...And love—Even when it is humiliating. Even when it is messy. Even when it costs you something. Because that is how Christ loved you. And there is blessing... in no other way.

Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God, on this holy night, we thank you for the gift of your Son, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Teach us to love—not as we wish, but as Christ has loved us: With humility, with sacrifice, and with grace. Give us courage to serve, Strength to endure, And hearts that reflect your love in a broken world. Until that day when we gather at your heavenly table, keep us faithful in love. In the name of Christ, our Lord, Amen.