



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Fourth Sunday of Easter (B) – 1 John 3:16-24

Focus: *New Commandment of Love*

word of life

“And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.” 1 John 3:23 (NRSV)

Read 1 John 3:16-24

During his last supper with his disciples, Jesus stands up from the table, removes his outer robe, takes a towel, and begins to wash the feet of his disciples. Later that night, he instructs his disciples “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another.” (John 13:34 NRSV)

This new commandment to love is a central theme in the First Letter of John. Although not all Bible scholars believe this letter is written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of John, there is no doubt this passage builds on the foundation established in John 13 to love.

1. *How is love a mark of a Christian?*
2. *Does it sound like loving is an option with Jesus? Explain.*

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments with the intention that people integrate these commandments into their daily life. The first three commandments focus on ways to express love and respect for God; the rest of the commandments emphasize interpersonal relationships. Following the Ten Commandments helps us to live in a positive relationship with God and others.

3. *Name the Ten Commandments. (See Exodus 20 for assistance if needed)*
4. *Select several of the commandments and reflect how love is part of that commandment.*

Jesus gives us a new commandment—to love one another. In reality the essence of each of the Ten Commandments is love. The new commandment by Jesus to love is more like a succinct summary of all that has gone before. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.” (John 13:34 NRSV) Jesus simplifies the law: Love one another.

5. *Why do you believe Jesus needed to issue a new commandment to love?*

“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” 1 John 3:18 (NRSV) Love is intended by Jesus to be a verb, overflowing with action. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, heals the sick, forgives sins, and welcomes the outcast. Jesus shows love throughout his life and most certainly in his death. “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” (1 John 3:16 NRSV). This willingness to give of one’s life for someone else becomes the standard of love.

6. *How do you describe the love of Jesus?*
7. *Give one of your favorite examples from the life of Jesus where he demonstrated love.*

We are not just to have faith in Christ, but that faith is to bear fruit in the form of love as we follow the command by Jesus to love. God’s love at work in our lives opens our eyes, hearts, and hands towards our neighbor in need. “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother and sister in need and yet refuses help? (1 John 3:17 NRSV)

8. *How does God’s love abiding in us stir us to help our neighbor in need?*

word among us

They had been together since high school, and it was time to think about marriage. He was sure she was the one for him; in fact, he had been sure since their first date. But she was wavering and hesitant about taking that big step of marriage. She admitted there were no longer fireworks when they were together. She wanted to ride off into the sunset with music in the background—just like in the movies. She also knew how special he was; in fact he was her best friend.

1. *Any advice for this couple?*
2. *What is love supposed to look like?*
3. *Is this the kind of love commanded by Jesus?*

Love is such a complex and far-reaching word and concept. Our English word *love* is put to the test to adequately describe the range of meanings. The Greek language (used in the New Testament) commonly uses three words for love:

- agápe: unconditional love towards another, no matter the response; a sacrificial love
- éros: passionate, sensual love; used to describe the emotion of love
- philía: love and loyalty between friends; root used in the name Philadelphia

The word in the Greek text in both the Gospel of John and the First Letter of John is agápe. We are commanded by Jesus to love each other, regardless of their response to us. We love as Christ first loved us.

4. *How is it helpful to see the word love broken down in different meanings?*
5. *When it comes to love, where do we as humans tend to get confused?*
6. *In your opinion, which of the three kinds of love described above takes the most maturity?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

Jesus appears to be serious about loving. His commandment to love one another does not allow wiggle room to be selective of who we love and when we love. Jesus cuts through any confusion over the interpretation about commandments given in the past.

As we ponder and choose how to live our lives faithfully on a daily basis, love permeates all of our choices and responses. We have no choice but to actually see our neighbor in need. Not only do we offer our charity, but we also ask the tough questions about the reasons behind poverty, violence, school drop-outs, hunger, and the list goes on. We strive for justice by not settling for superficial answers to systemic injustice in communities. We accept there is no peace, until there is justice.

7. *How does the commandment to love invite you to see others in need?*
8. *Is it possible as a Christian not to see a neighbor in need and respond? Explain.*

Prayer

Christ, you command us to love. Now open our hearts to love as you have first loved us. Amen

last word

This week,
do one random act of love
for someone not in your usual realm of influence.