

## Sunday 15 May 2022

### Call to Worship:

Jesus has given us a new commandment:  
We are commanded to love one another.  
Just as Christ has loved us,  
So we ought to have love for one another.  
By this, everyone will know we are Christ's disciples:  
By our love for one another.  
Come, may we join our hearts in worship:  
Worship God by loving one another.

**Opening Hymn:** All creatures of our God and King

### Opening Prayer:

#### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of mercy, your command to love one another across all differences opens us to new horizons, yet we often respond with fear and judgment that hinders your goal for humanity. Forgive our sins, we pray, and give us a true repentance that leads to life for all creation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

God's promises are trustworthy and true; your sins are forgiven. Be at peace to serve the Lord, and may you always be known by your love.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Surprising God, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; Acts you make all things new. Long ago you called your church to a love beyond all social and cultural differences and gave them the gift of your Holy Spirit to open their hearts to enact such love. Give us that same spirit of openness, that we too might discern new directions in our day for your dream to reconcile and heal all creation. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Hymn of Forgiveness:** Lord, bring the day to Pass

Tune: Love Unknown

Lord, bring the day to pass  
when forest, rock and hill,  
the beasts, the birds, the grass,  
will know your finished will:  
when we attain our destiny  
and nature lives in harmony.

Forgive our careless use  
of water, ore and soil —  
the plenty we abuse  
supplied by others' toil:  
save us from making self our creed,  
turn us towards each other's need.

Give us, when we release  
creation's secret powers,  
to harness them for peace —  
our children's peace and ours:  
teach us the art of mastering  
in servant form, which draws death's sting.

Creation groans, travails,  
futile its present plight,  
bound — till the hour it hails  
God's children born of light  
who enter on their true estate.  
Come, Lord: new heavens and earth create.

**Readings:**

Revelation 21:1-6

Psalms 148

John 13:31-35

**Reflection:**

From our Gospel text today, we hear what is probably one of the most familiar phrases of Scripture. “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". Though that phrase is not new or earth shatteringly unique. To love one another is a big part of the Jewish tradition, and it is also found in many other religious traditions.

And love in our world, or the seeking of love pervades almost all of our existence. In poetry, music theatre, movies, novels and even history itself, we see just how obsessed with love we as humans are. Of course, in many ways our concepts of love get tainted by our experiences and through the media. Love often ranges from I love that flavour of ice cream all the way up to including the love and devotion that happens with lasting relationship. Love at the same time could be considered an irresistible feeling, a fleeting charm, and an unbreakable bond. Yet each of these is at odds with each other.

Like many meaningful concepts in life, God's word speaks clearly as to the nature and expression of love. But we are often so preoccupied with fantasy that we are unable to consider the beauty and glory of reality. Jesus Himself is offered as the exemplary loving person, and He calls His disciples to love as He did and does.

And that is the call that the disciples receive, it's important to note that this dialogue occurs just after Judas leaves the other disciples at the last supper, to betray Jesus for his few pieces of silver.

We know what is coming and we know where Judas is off to. We start to question what Jesus might do in response to the impending betrayal, and as always Jesus' response is rooted in a bigger cosmic reality than his own needs-based response. Jesus rather than responding with fear or avenging what is to come, talks about the glorification that is to come (verse 31-32). This glorification will be realized in his death on the cross and his resurrection. Through these events God will be glorified in Christ. And in this moment, Jesus wants to prepare his disciples for that reality and to command them to love one another.

Other love commands come to mind from the bible, in particular is the one to love our neighbours. But in this case Jesus is referring to those of his closest followers, those who have journeyed and ministered together for some three years.

Now when it comes to loving those with whom we agree or are partial to relatively easy. It's easy to be loving to Crusaders supporters for instance, or towards those with a common enemy, some I'm more than happy to support the Highlanders, especially when they are playing the blues. But being Loving towards those that are completely opposed to our way of being or belief is so much harder.

It is a part of the human condition to love and to want to be loved. It's built into us to be wanted and appreciated. Reality is ... it's easier to love those who are more loving and lovable. It is said that John, in his old age, would remind those around him to love one another. When questioned why he told them this so very often, his reply would be, "Because it is what our Lord commanded. If it is all you do, then it is enough."

Accepting love can be a challenge for some of us. Our own life's experience with love or what we may have seen of love means that we can be rather reticent to be loved. This human relationship to love, can then get in the way of receiving and being open to God's love in our lives. This situation can often be emphasized when it comes to the likes of Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, and the reinforcement that God's love is like a fathers love or a mother's love. Our own experience of those at a human level, means we don't see God's love as a perfect parents love but as an imperfect love.

And yet it is God deep desire and integral to Gods nature to love us. And to love us unconditionally.

In the words of Thomas Goodwin, love is God's delight. God delights to love us, and God delights in our love for one another. Delight may be an easier entry for people seeking to understand what it means for Jesus to be glorified by his death and for his disciples to join in his glorification with their lifestyles. God delights when our lives share his love because it shows that we trust God's love to be enough, we relish his love, and he relishes us relishing his love.

Scripture proclaims boldly: God is love. Therefore, heaven is full of love because it is the very presence of the God who is love. When Jesus was walking around on earth, God was made incarnate, and so was pure, beautiful, love.

The covenant context is probably why Jesus calls the commandment “new.” It is obviously not new in the sense that a command to love has never been given before. Rather, it is new in the sense that a new community emerges from its giving. In the context of covenant, the command to love one another is probably a command to love others in the community. However, Christians have always read the command as universal, connecting it, for instance, to Jesus’ command to love one’s enemies (Matt. 5:44). Love, we say, does not limit itself according to the social profile of the person. The content of love is not detailed. The passage simply points to Jesus as the model: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” Readers naturally think of Jesus’ constant seeking and compassion for those he meets, of his weeping over Lazarus, of his commitment to the security of his flock. However, the command to love transcends such examples. As Jesus notes boldly, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” This is what Jesus does; he lays down his life for his friends. Having Jesus as a model undoes all the limits. Whatever love might mean in a given moment; it asks for everything. Love does not calculate the costs.

But can we be commanded to love? Is it really love if there is a command from God to love? Can love be commanded? Love feels more like a gift, an event, than an act of obedience. Thus, in the theology of John, love between humans belongs to God’s presence. In the language of covenant, Jesus is present through the love of the disciples. In the language of theological presence, to live in Jesus is to love and to love is to live in Jesus.

When we allow the love of Christ to take deep root in us, so that it flourishes in all that we do and say to one another, it is the first step in helping the world to understand how Christ has transformed glory. We give witness to what no purely verbal argument can ever

accomplish: the glory of God breathing through the life of a Christ-centred community.

**Hymn of Reflection:** Christ is made the sure foundation LUYH #250

**Prayers of Intercession:**

We have hope.

John writes in Revelation 21:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;  
for the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,  
coming down out of heaven from God,  
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
'See, the home of God is now among the people.

He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the old order of things have passed away.'

And the one who was seated on the throne said,  
'See, I am making all things new.'

Also, he said,

'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'

Then he said to me,

'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the  
water of life.'

We pray for those who are lonely.

We hope in the promise that the home of God will be among people:  
that God will dwell with us,  
that we will be his people and that God himself will be with us.

We mention in our hearts those we know who are lonely or isolated.

Pause

Lord you said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

'Amen, make all things new!'

We pray for those who are crying;  
the sad, the depressed and the anxious.

We hope in the promise that God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

We mention in our hearts those we know who are sad and who  
know tears.

Pause

Lord you said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

'Amen, make all things new!'

We pray for those who are experiencing the consequences of death,  
the bereaved and those who are mourning.

We hope in the promise that death and mourning will be no more.

We mention in our hearts those we know  
who are affected by death and mourning

Pause

Lord you said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

'Amen, make all things new!'

We pray for those who are in pain,  
suffering from illness either physical or mental.

We hope in the promise that crying and pain will be no more.

We mention in our hearts those we know who are ill or in pain.

Pause

Lord you said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

'Amen, make all things new!'

We pray for those who are thirsty for truth, love and grace;  
those who seek God and his life with earnest hearts.

We hope in the promise that God will give water to the thirsty  
without cost

from the spring of the water of life.

We mention in our hearts those we know who hunger and thirst for God.

Pause

Lord you said, 'See, I am making all things new.'

'Amen, make all things new!'

Lord, your words are trustworthy and true.

You are the Alpha and the Omega,

the beginning and the end.

We pray all this in the powerful and hopeful name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.

Written by Sara Hargreaves

Loving God, we give you thanks for the ministry of reconciliation to which you call us in the name of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

Accept these gifts for your mission to heal all creation. May they be a testament to your love for us as we share them in love for you;

through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

**Hymn:** A Touching Place (click [here](#) for video)

Christ's is the world in which we move;

Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love;

Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,

and Christ is the one who meets us here.

*To the lost Christ shows his face,*

*to the unloved he gives his embrace,*

*to those who cry in pain or disgrace,*

*Christ makes, with his friends, a touching place.*

Feel for the people we most avoid –

strange or bereaved or never employed.

Feel for the women and feel for the men

who fear that their living is all in vain.

*To the lost...*

Feel for the parents who've lost their child,

feel for the women whom men have defiled,

feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,



and feel for the weary who find no rest.

*To the lost...*

Feel for the lives by life confused,  
riddled with doubt, in loving abused;  
feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,  
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

*To the lost...*

John L. Bell (born 1949) and Graham Maule (1958-2019)  
Tune: DREAM ANGUS (Scottish lullaby arranged by John L. Bell)  
Copyright © 1989, 1996 Wild Goose Resource Group  
c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, G2 3DH, Scotland.

### **Blessing:**

We are the loved people of God.  
Together, in our gifts and in ourselves,  
we add beauty to life here and beyond us  
in a myriad of ways.  
Through the Spirit,  
we become part of the tree of life,  
for the healing of the nations.  
And the blessing of God, Creator, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all.

**Closing Hymn** "Love divine, all loves excelling" LUYH #351

(Together) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Andrew Howley

15.05.2022

CCLI Licence 288039