

“The New Evangelicalism”

John 13:31-38; 18-30
Communion Meditation

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Meditation

It is important to understand Peter serves as the spokesperson of the disciples.

He says what everyone is feeling and thinking.

Some three years previous Peter had responded to Jesus calling out to him: **Follow me!**

He unreservedly did and now the disciples were bonded to Jesus, they were a family together.

So, it was a terrible shock to hear Jesus tell them:

Where I am going now, you cannot follow.

Peter responds, the disciples respond: **Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.**

But despite this deep emotional conviction, the truth of the matter, is that they were not, in fact, ready to follow.

Something more must be formed in them before they are completely, perfectly, ready.

This reading, from John 13, takes place at the Last Supper

Jesus has been sharing bread and cup with his disciples.

In verse 31 the culmination of the Supper and indeed the culmination of Jesus' life is reached:

Now the Son of Man is glorified.

This word, glory, is shorthand for an entire spectrum of what is right, good, loving and beautiful.

In this case it is the perfection of Jesus in his relationship with God and as God.

Glory is what God is and what God's creation under the stewardship of Man was created to be and shall be with the revealing of Jesus Christ in the fullness of time.

In the meantime, the Glory of God is to be displayed on earth through the followers of Jesus.

How so?

Through the new commandment of Jesus.

The disciples knew very well the old commandments – the **Thou Shalt Not** – of the Ten Commandments.

The Old Commandments were designed to fence off the powers of sin and evil.

The New Commandment is designed to display the Glory of God.

The disciples are still living in the land of the Old Commandments.

Despite Peter and the rest proclaiming their unity with Jesus; what is actually going on deep in their hearts?

At one extreme, murder.

Judas certainly knew the consequence of his action to betray Jesus. We do not know his motivations. Presumably he thought he was doing the right thing. Somehow, in some way, the social environment among the disciples created some space for Judas to develop his plans.

At one extreme, murder. For the rest, disowning

The disciples were not yet sufficiently formed in their relationship to Jesus and one another to maintain their 'following' to the uttermost; to have a perfect following, a glorious following. They would rather disown their following of Jesus if it was to lead into the most difficult place.

So, Jesus will perfect their following with the New Commandment – **Love One Another**

What does this mean?

First and obviously, to not murder one another or disown one another!

For the most part murder is not an issue – Judas was a special case – nevertheless, Somehow, in some way, the social environment among the disciples created some space for Judas to develop his plans.

We certainly know that sometimes the church environment can allow for the development of abusive and criminal activity.

Loving one another means building relations and developing social organization that guard against abuse and crimes.

What does **love one another** mean? Second and also somewhat obvious, . . . **love one another. As I have loved you . . .**

I really like the way the British scholar Edwin Hoskyns puts it:

. . . but it is also new, for whereas the Old Testament demanded that men should love their neighbors as themselves, the New Law is that they should love the brethren better than themselves . . . and die for their friends.

Finally, and most important, the New Commandment – **Love One Another**

Could only be fully formed among the disciples when; motivated by the display of the glory of God in the life of Jesus; they love their fellow disciples better than themselves; in a public proclamation before the watching world.

Love one another, so that, everyone will know Jesus. This is what a disciple is, someone who displays the life and work of their master.

As we gather around the Communion Table may we commit to deeply struggle with this New Commandment. I challenge us on this because while we may love one another within the four walls of our particular congregation we do not do such a good job outside the walls and it is often outside the walls where the watching world observes.

I have been reading Ken Coates' book on the history of contact between Yukon natives and the first settlers

He makes some interesting observations on the Anglican, Catholic and Baptist competition for indigenous school children in the 1950's. A competition observed by the First Nations with some amusement and incredulity.

After the establishment of Haines Junction in the 1940's the Anglican Bishop was bragging in the National Newsletter of how they were going to be "first on the ground" like in other Yukon communities.

And in case we think this problem is just between Anglicans and Catholics, I assure you their competitive spirit is nothing compared to Evangelicals.

When Harold Lee, the founder of the Whitehorse Indian Mission School, visited Klukshu in the late 1940's and having witnessed a Catholic priest being present his support letter let everyone know the importance of an Evangelical work.

North American Evangelicals have, with questionable wisdom, wholeheartedly embraced entrepreneurial methodologies from the marketplace that are downright corrosive to anything like: **Love One Another**. Love the other better than you love yourself!

Peter and the disciples were not ready to follow Jesus on the pathway down which he trod.

But it was the only pathway that would bring out a display of the Glory of God.

The disciples were left with a different kind of journey

One that relied on the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit; one that would build on the death and resurrection of Christ as spoken to by the Table; one that would lead them to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

May we all keep to the same journey.

Amen.