

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 15, 2022
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl
Jesus' living trust: Love one another

After Judas left, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once."

³³"Dear children, I am going to be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

³⁴"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

—John 13:31-35

Do you have a living trust? You know what that is, right? A living trust is a written legal document through which your assets are placed into a trust for your benefit during your lifetime and then transferred to designated beneficiaries at your death by your chosen representative. Included in a living trust are directions and instructions of what is to happen at the time of your passing.

In the words that we have before us today, you could say that Jesus is revealing his living trust. He is revealing to his disciples what his plans and desires are for their lives. He is passing down to them what he wants for them.

It's Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. It's the day before Jesus is going to die. Now, it was not uncommon for a Jewish person, right before he died, to gather his family together and tell them one last thing that he wanted them to remember. That's what Jesus does here. He knows he's going to die. He knows that he's no longer going to be spending time with his disciples in the same way that he had been doing before. And so, the night before he died, Jesus gathered his disciples together. He had one last thing he wanted to share with them.

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Just picture the scene. Jesus is sitting around the table with his disciples. He looks at his disciples and says, "Look at your fellow disciples who are sitting next to you. John, look at Andrew. Peter, look at Philip. Matthew, look at James. Look at these people who are sitting next to you! I want you to have love for one another."

It's as if Jesus were sitting here with you and me. "Look at these people who are sitting next to you. I want you to have love for one another. I don't want you to just love them when you feel like loving them. Constantly have love for one another."

Oh, it's easy to show love for others when things are going great, isn't it? When things are going great in life, it's easy to fly high on cloud 9. You get a promotion at work, and it's easy to come home and show love to your family. You accomplish all your plans and goals and find satisfaction in your work. It's easy to show love to others when things are going great.

But take all that away. You don't know if you are going to have a job tomorrow, or not. You face frustration after frustration with your goals and plans. It's difficult to love, isn't it? Parents can relate to this. When the kids are constantly arguing with each other, they're tired and cranky; it's hard to show them love, right? When we are in very stressful situations, it becomes very difficult to love.

Jesus says, "Look at the people around. I want you to love them. Not just when you feel like it. Not just when they are loveable. But all the time. You make a conscientious, willful decision to go into action for the best interest of the person sitting around you."

Care about each other. Don't walk past each other in the courtyard at school without saying something to each other. Don't walk past each other at church without greeting each other. Pray for each other. We love to pray for each other. And if a prayer is offered in church, we want to seek that person out and offer them words of encouragement. A meal is delivered to someone who is sick. Someone is in need? We look for ways to meet that need.

Jesus says, "**Love one another.**" This is not some sentimental, fluffy kind of love. This is a deep-seeded, action kind of love. If you want concrete examples of this kind of love, look at what the apostle Paul writes. He really hits this hard, doesn't he?

There is one phrase in Paul's words that really hits me hard. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul writes, "**If I have the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries and have all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.**" I am nothing.

Oh, we want to be something, don't we? If I have the greatest ability to speak God's Word, if I know the deepest insights into all of Scripture, and I possess all knowledge, I'm a pretty smart dude. And if I have a faith that is so strong and so big that I can move mountains, wow! I'm something pretty special, huh? But if I do not have love, **I am nothing. Zero. Zilch.**

So I want love. I really want to love you and the people in my life. And then Paul goes on to describe what love is. And I have to tell you that this is this some hard stuff. **"Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant. It does not behave indecently. It is not selfish. It is not irritable. It does not keep a record of wrongs. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never comes to an end."**

If you are like me right now, you can probably identify many times just today where you did not love. Boy, God is exposing my sinful heart. It looks ugly.

What a mess! I can't help but express with Paul, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" And, my friends, the answer to Paul's question is right before us. Jesus is sitting with his disciples, and he says, **"Just as I have loved you..."** There it is.

The events of Good Friday were weighing heavy on Jesus' heart. In the next day he would experience the darkest moments of his existence in eternity. And he would be facing it all alone. Nobody by his side. Not even his Father. Jesus would be facing the suffering of hell on the cross all alone. Oh, how that weighed on his heart!

But what does he do? He doesn't think of himself. He is thinking about his disciples. He is thinking about the people in this world. Jesus is in the most stressful time of his eternal existence. And what does he do? He loves his disciples. He demonstrates the full extent of his love by serving them. When the disciples are arguing about who is the greatest, Jesus could have turned to them and set them straight by giving them a time out. He could have said, "Just leave me alone for a little while." He could have become reclusive. He could have pulled away from his disciples, kept to himself, pondered the difficult situation he was in. But he doesn't. He loves. He loves by serving. He bends down and shows them that love as he washes their feet. He does the work of a servant. But that was a visible lesson to something far greater he was about to do.

Jesus said to his disciples, **"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once."** In these words, Jesus is saying that he is glorified, and God is glorified through him. In what way? When Jesus talks about glory, he sees himself going to the cross. He's going to be arrested, put on trial, falsely accused, mocked, beaten, crucified, and die. And Jesus says that through that cross he is going to be glorified and his Father is going to be glorified. Why? Because at the cross Jesus gives his greatest display of love in service. Instead of letting us die for all our loveless acts, Jesus removes those sins from us. Instead of letting us be nothing, Jesus makes us something. Instead of letting us remain as objects of God's wrath, he makes us objects of his love. What took place at the cross is God's greatest glory because of what is gained through the cross. God gains you and me. Instead of casting us aside as enemies, he welcomes us to himself as friends.

Do you see Jesus doing that for you? Do you see Jesus loving you with an undying love? It will never end. And it's because of his love for us that he gives us his living trust. **"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."** I find what Jesus says here truly remarkable. By the love you show each other, all people will know that you are Jesus' disciples. The way you treat each other is a visible sign to the rest of the world that you follow Christ.

There was an unbelieving Greek historian in the second century by the name of Lucian who was very critical of the philosophers who did not practice what they preached. Well, Lucian wrote this about the Christians. Now remember he was an unbeliever. "It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are brethren" (Lucian, AD 120-200). Would the people around us say the same thing? Would the people of our community say, "You know, the people at Emmanuel Lutheran Church really have something special. They really care about each other. They call each other brothers and sisters."

Tertullian, a Christian leader in the third century, once wrote: "It is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness, that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Look!' they say. 'How they love one another! Look how they are prepared to die for one another!'" Would people say the same things about us? I know that I have received many comments from guests who come to worship. They have told me that our church is a very friendly and welcoming group of Christians. Praise God for that! People notice the way you care about people. We want to be a place where we truly love one another. When someone asks you, "How are you doing," we're not just being polite. We care. It's true that we all have our quirks and shortcomings at Emmanuel Lutheran. But our Savior who is still among us daily forgives us our sins and daily empowers us to live as his people. We forgive each other. We make sacrifices for each other. We want to be the kind of place where we would even be willing to

die for each other. That's love! Ultimately, that is the best way we can glorify our Savior, for the amazing love he has shown to us. Let's not just talk about it. Let's show it. **"Everyone will know that you are my disciples," Jesus says, "if you have love for one another."** Amen.