

5/19/2019

“Marked by a Loving God”

**John 13:31-35**

**Fifth Sunday in Easter**

**Theme: Followers of Jesus Christ are known by their love for one another and others!**

As we continue in the season of Christ’s resurrection, we look back at the last evening of his earthly life. Gathered together with his closest followers or disciples, as well as family, he has a last supper with them. Just after Judas leaves to betray Jesus, John records the following words of Jesus. . .

**John 13:31-35**

*When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. “My children, I will 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.*

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Today we consider being “marked” by a loving God. By marked, I mean something that distinguishes us. Something about us that gives an indication of who we are and whose we are as children of God, and as followers of Jesus.

When you think about what it is that distinguishes you that let’s other people know something about you, what comes to mind? And, as you consider other people, what is it that you look for, listen for, or in other ways tells you something about them. What do you remember them by, and what will others remember you by?

Is it something about the way you look – what you wear, your hairstyle, tattoos or other “marks”? Is it something about the way you speak? Maybe it’s some kind of behavior or action? Maybe it’s what you own or drive. Maybe it’s your job or occupation. Or maybe it’s the friends or other people you associate with, or the places you hang out or frequent.

We most likely all make some kind of initial judgment about others based on these and other criteria, don’t we?

Some time ago, I stopped at the Arby's in Glasgow for lunch. There was a young man who was a cashier/server who had a rather large, and I would say nice looking, Celtic Cross tattooed on his arm. It gave me something to start a conversation with him about his faith journey. It obviously meant something significant to him, as a sign/mark of his faith.

Although I don't have a tattoo, a couple of years ago, one of our confirmation students noticed a mark on my hand that I've had for as long as I can remember. However, she noticed something I had never noticed before, because it had actually changed over time, with an additional mark as well.



On my left hand, she noticed what appears to be a heart facing me, as well as a footprint facing the heart. For as long as I can remember, what is now a heart was simply a square. Interestingly, one of my favorite ways of considering my life is as a journey to the heart of God; to love as Jesus has loved me. Now I have a reminder of that whenever I look at my hand.

Which brings us back to this . . .

† **Before his death and resurrection, Jesus gave his disciples (followers) the command to love one another.**

Jesus knows that even his closest disciples, whom he will now call “friends” if they do as he commands (John 15:15-15), had their differences in thoughts, beliefs, egos and personalities. So he gives them another commandment . . . to love one another, even as he has loved them.

The truth is that even for those of us who have given our life to Christ, and hope to follow his way, find it challenging to live by his example. It’s difficult at times to truly love others as he loves us. We may say things or do things, intentionally or not, that hurt and offend others we hope to be family and friends with. I may not be the first to admit it, but I struggle sometimes too. How about you?

Jesus teaches us to love even our enemies, so it shouldn’t be that hard to love one another should it? And that doesn’t just mean those gathered here in this place, but all who have given their lives to him.

† **Our love for one another is a reflection of Christ’s love for us.**

Friends, we gather during this season to acknowledge that Jesus came and gave his very life for us. And by that gift we are set free from sin and death. And we also affirm that he rose from mortal death to show God’s love and power for all to believe and receive God’s power and grace. By His Spirit we, too, can love one another as Jesus has loved us.

And our love is a reflection of Christ’s love. Indeed, it is Christ’s love living in us and through us! Jesus said, ***“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-15 NIV)***

From our bulletin insert today for Christian Home Month, one of the ways that families can show Christ’s love to others is to identify people in your community who are in need of knowing God’s love (someone who has just lost a family member, someone struggling in school, someone new to our community, someone who can no longer drive a car, someone who is sick). Each month, make cards together to send to those who need to know God’s love; or, as a family, visit someone from your church or our community who is alone and needs to know there are those who care about him or her.

And when we think about how others -- family, friends and even acquaintances -- will remember us when we leave this earth, what will be the hallmarks of those memories? I felt the love and peace of God while attending the funeral service for the loved one of some of our members this past week. She was a woman of great faith and love, which was shown and shared with her family, friends, neighbors and others through her many years of life on this earth. She was known as a believer and follower of Jesus, who has now returned to her heavenly home and family there.

† **All people will know true followers of Jesus by their love for one other – and others.**

Friends, we know too that there are many who are still searching for love and acceptance. Some need basic necessities to get by. Many are looking for hope or meaning in life. Some are still exploring self-identity. Others struggle with ongoing problems or addiction. Some just need direction and encouragement. Others want to make a positive difference in the world.

Sometimes those persons look to communities of faith such as ours for ways and opportunities to meet those needs, hopes and dreams. Some have heard about Jesus, others may not have. Their information and understanding is often filtered by what they have seen or heard on TV, movies and social media. Ultimately, though, when they walk through the doors of a church or other place of worship and fellowship, or into a small group, or participate in a mission, or attend a meeting, their impressions are formed from personal experience.

Jesus says, the signs or mark of our true walk of faith or spiritual life will be shown by our love for one another – and for them. They are looking for a welcoming, caring, given, loving community. This is true when it's easy for us, and also when it's not so easy. I'm sure you can think of a time or two, or one issue or another.

I hope that all of us at CCUMC will continue to strive to be “marked” by a loving God, as we continue our journey of faith, hope and love together in Christ, by the Holy Spirit! Amen!

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Questions for Reflection:

How do you often distinguish one person from another? What “marks” do you consciously or unconsciously use?

Is there someone in your family or church community with whom you struggle? What would it look like to give this person/s some “elbow room” at the table of God?

Name one way you have been “marked” to show love in your community?

When was the last time you have looked for, or found, God in an unexpected place?