**SUNDAY**

**5/15/22**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 13:31-35**

In the state of Maryland there are many rivers which flow into the Atlantic Ocean. Along the coastline in the lakes and rivers there are many geese and swans.

The geese and swans mostly seem to be indifferent to each other,

 although occasionally there was a great rivalry between them.

Once or twice a year it snows and the river Tread Avon freezes over.

One morning, Theresa, was having breakfast near a big window

 where she had a perfect view of the river.

When she looked out of the window she saw a large Canadian goose,

 with its feet frozen in the ice.

She knew there was nothing she could do.

The ice was not thick enough to support her weight.

As she looked around, she saw a line of beautiful swans flying overhead.

The leader of the swans made a right turn and started flying in a circle.

Then all at once the entire circle of swans descended

 and landed on the ice where the goose was.

Theresa was astonished to see the swans

 surround the goose frozen to the ice.

With their long necks the swans started

 pecking at the ice in a circle around the goose.

They kept this up for quite a while.

The ice was not real thick and with the hard pecking of the swans

 a circle of ice broke around the Canadian Goose's feet.

The swans ascended, and flew in circles above the goose,

 as if they were waiting to see the goose take flight.

The goose stood up but couldn't more it's frozen wings.

Again the swans descended and landed around the goose.

With their powerful beaks,

 they began to scrape the goose's wings from top to bottom.

They lifted the goose's wings to scrape the ice that was frozen on its feathers.

Finally, the goose extended its wings and flapped them several times.

The four swans flew back to join the rest of the swans

 which were still circling above them.

Theresa was thrilled to watch as the goose flew up with incredible speed,

 and joined the swans in the sky

 following along behind the ones who had come to her rescue.

If birds can set aside their rivalry, then certainly we humans should be able to.

We can love others without totally agreeing with them.

We can offer love and care to people who are different from us,

 and people we don't agree with.

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give you; love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Others will know you are my disciples, if you love one another."

We have all done loving deeds to those we love.

But what about those who hate us, and hurt us?

Loving those who hate and hurt us, is loving as Jesus loved.

That can be very difficult.

It was a tough one for the disciples.

And it can be a tough one for us.

Love is a choice that we make.

Brenda decided to visit her elderly neighbor, Eleanor.

After they were settled on the living room couch, they had a nice chat.

Brenda asked how Eleanor was doing.

"I am doing OK," she answered.

"I am glad to hear that," Brenda replied.

After a few more minutes of small talk she looked at her watch and said:

“Well, I guess I need to be going.”

As she headed for the door she turned around and said,

“Is there anything you need me to do for you?”

Eleanor shook her head "no."

"All right," Brenda said. "But if there is anything I can do, be sure to let me know.”

But Brenda must have noticed the dirty dishes in the sink,

 the trash cans running over, and the carpet needed to be vacuumed.

A little bit of active love could have made a big difference.

Active and sincere love can make a big difference.

Real love can be seen when we are willing to move beyond the comfortable.

When we are willing to roll up our sleeves

 and get our hands dirty to help a neighbor.

Active love doesn't ask, "What can I do?"

It sees what needs to be done and does it.

What kind of love do we have – active or passive?

Passive love is saying: "I love you."

Active love is being available to demonstrate that love.

It is easy to say "I love you."

It means a lot more to act out that love.

Jesus gave us a new commandment, that we love one another.

As Jesus loves us, we also should love one another.

AMEN