

Lent Day 26

Thursday March 15, 2018

Reading: John 13:21-38

³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Reflection

This year, fall 2017 and winter 2018, I have been teaching History of Christianity. What’s interesting is how quickly the church fell into division. We can see even in the letters of the New Testament that there were divisions happening and those divisions kept happening right through our history. Now without a doubt error needed to be addressed and theological convictions impact practice so it has been necessary throughout our history to think, reflect, dialogue and record consensus. However, when we hear Jesus’s words written above we are reminded that it is our love for each other that is the primary witness to the world that we are Jesus’s disciples.

This pushes us, modern day Christians, to focus on two areas. First, we need to actively work at loving each other. In some ways, earlier generations of Christians had it easier. When you became a Christian, often, you were ejected from your family and community, making the Christian community your new people. Today we can become Christians with very little repercussions but that also means we have to be more intentional to actually form a Christian community vs. Christian events. We can’t love each other if we’re not with each other. Second, we need to learn to navigate our differences in a way that doesn’t negate our love for each other. Without a doubt, this is a challenge, but if we want the world to know we belong to Jesus this is what we must do.

When you look at these two together, it’s like any relationship, presence and communication. But within these are other elements as well. In presence we need to practice patience and grace. Within communication we must practice good listening and slow speech. Getting along in any community is difficult, but a community which can navigate conflict in a way that maintains the distinction of love is what we are called to and will witness to the world what the reconciled people of God should look like.

Prayer

Lover of our soul, thank you for showing us how to love even our enemies. Help us to do community with the same love and care you showed for the one who was set to betray you. Even more, help us to love our friends who can, at times, hurt us worse than our enemies. Amen.