

# The New Standard of Love

*Love the Way Jesus Taught It*

By Steve Viars

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** John 13:31-38

**Preached On:** Sunday, March 9, 2014

## **Faith Church**

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

**Website:** <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

It's great to see you and you are either here because you remembered to set your clock ahead or because you forgot and you're here for the 8:00 am service wondering why we started it 30 minutes late but you realize either way that works for us so we're really glad that you are here with us today and if you're visiting or if you've never just taken the time to formally introduce yourself to us, if you're ready to do that, we would be happy for you to. The way that works around here, on the back of the program that you've received, there is a Connection Card. We would encourage you to fill that out and then tear it off and drop it in the offering plate when it comes by or leave it out at the Welcome Center on your way out. That really just gives us an opportunity to know how we can serve you. That's what it's all about: how can we connect with you. So, if you're prepared to do that, we would be happy for you to.

Also, I want to encourage all of us to note the prayer requests that are located in that program and we have a number of folks from our church family who are going through deep water right now. One of the ways that we show love for our church family is by taking one another to the throne of grace that was purchased at a great price, the shed blood of Christ so that we could have access to come into his throne room boldly and many times, part of what we do in that prayer time is just asking God on behalf of our friends so would you be sure to note them and faithfully pray for your friends throughout the week.

Today we're going to be celebrating the Lord's table as part of our Sunday morning service. The Bible doesn't instruct us on exactly when or exactly how frequently we ought to observe communion. Paul simply says this in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." For as often, so we would understand that to mean that there ought to be some kind of regularity in the way followers of Jesus Christ participate in the Lord's table and for us, we're creatures of habit, generally speaking we celebrate the Lord's table at our church Family Nights, the first Sunday night of each month and we do that for a lot of reasons. However, we have worked into our schedule this year to celebrate the Lord's table a couple of times on Sunday mornings and we're doing that for a variety of reasons and one of them is that we're just trying to work really hard at each one of our services becoming its own church family. So, there is a sense in which today is the 9:30 service celebrating

the Lord's table and all that that entails together and we hope that this is going to be a meaningful time in your spiritual life.

As you know, the annual theme that we've selected this year for our church is "Loving Our Neighbors" and we're trying to do that especially in five specific ways. One is implementing our soul care initiatives to achieve deeper friendships within our church family. That's part of even what we're doing this morning is working at loving our neighbors that we go to church with, loving them well. Secondly, as individual church members, growing in our ability to build stronger relationships with those who live right around us. You know, it appears that the snow may just about be over. I don't want to be a false prophet, I mean, this is Indiana. We might get a few more but at least we're on the back end of the winter. Praise God on high! What that means is: you're going to have more natural opportunities to hang with your neighbors and just to connect with your neighbors and I hope as you think about spring, one of the things that would excite you about the spring is the opportunity to love your neighbors who live right around you. Third, as a church family, developing our parish mentality to especially serve those who live right around our two ministry campuses, thinking strategically about that. God has placed us in these neighborhoods on purpose and we want to be sure that we're proactively loving our neighbors well who live right around the church house. Then, fourth, launching our Faith Community Development Corporation to serve urban neighborhoods with excellence. We believe that if the city is going to ask us to help revitalize urban neighborhoods in some of the areas of the highest concentrations of poverty in the city, we want to be all over that. If the city has asked us to be involved in that endeavor, we want to love our neighbors well. We're excited about that. Then, fifth, constructing the first phase of our Senior Living Community, loving those in our church family who are older. You might just want to especially pray about that right now. Frankly that project took a couple of hits this week. Apparently, God wants us to love our government officials more by spending some more time with them the next several months. Seriously, that's the way we want to look at this but God is sovereign and we're going to rejoice in his sovereignty.

The point of all that is, we want to take practical steps of growth this year in loving our neighbors and I hope we would all say this, "That's a struggle." Can we just authentic about that? It doesn't come naturally. I'd rather love myself. We'd rather order our lives around what's best for us. What serves us. What pleases us. If we could somehow squeeze all the selfishness out of our beings this morning, I think it's fair to say that most of us would need significantly smaller clothes. It would be a diet plan for the ages, huh? I mean, we're not going to act like loving our neighbors, that is just so easy and natural for my sweet self.

I would also suggest that we live in a world that doesn't always help us focus on others. I want to read you my horoscope from this week. That's why you came to the church house, right? You weren't thinking you'd get something from the Bible were you? Here's my horoscope just before I left town the other day. Every time, and I really don't think you could cram more foolishness into three sentences than this particular person did, "every time a celebrity goes to rehab, it's a reminder that privilege and pampering are no

substitute for self love. Why reserve the deep care and respect for when you're feeling fragile, put yourself first today.” That was my horoscope. See, there it is, put yourself first today. Seriously? No one has to tell me to do that. That comes natural because of the indwelling sin raging in my heart and yours. Thankfully, on the other side of the equation, we believe in the transforming power of the word of God. Isn't that right? To overcome our sin and to overcome the mentalities of our world. Thank the Lord that he's giving us his word. Psalm 19:7, “The law of the Lord is perfect restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure,” doing what? “Making wise the simple.” Making wise the simple.

So, we're working our way through the Upper Room discourse this spring which is found in John 13-17, organized around the idea of loving the way Jesus taught it. So, we first talked about the position of love from the way this passage opens when Jesus gets down on his knees and he washes his disciples' feet. Then last week, the loyalty of love, thinking about the contrast between the treachery of Judas' betrayal and a Savior who loved his own and who loved them to the end. This morning we want to turn our attention to what Jesus said after Judas left the room where the Lord explains the new standard of love.

With that in mind, please open your Bible now to John 13:31. That's on page 84 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you if you need that this morning. John 13:31 and I realize some of you who are just such creatures of habit, you might say, “Pastor Viars forgot the offering.” Just relax. We're professionals. We know what we're doing. No, we're actually going to intersperse additional worship songs and observing the Lord's table with our study of this passage this morning so you might need to put a bookmark in John 13 because I'm going to have you going up and down.

Just to get our thought process going, maybe I ought to ask you this question: did Jesus give any explicit rights to the unbelieving world? Think about that: did Jesus give any explicit rights to the unbelieving world? And I'm not asking that in the sense of could we make the case from inference or logical implication; I'm not supposing the question in a political or cultural sense. I'm just asking you: can you think of any place in the Bible where Jesus explicitly gives rights to the unbelieving world? And the answer is yes. In fact, right here in the this passage. In his book “The Mark of a Christian,” Francis Schaeffer, talking about this text said this, “In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority, he gives the world the right to judge whether you or I are born again Christians on the basis of our discernable love toward all Christians.” We'll explain later on that Scripture also calls upon us to love all people but focus first on this important point that Schaeffer makes: Jesus giving the unbelieving world to judge us, to judge those who call themselves the people of God.

Now, I want to ask you to follow along carefully as I read John 13, beginning in verse 31 and, friend, I hope you'll just lock onto the logic of this text. It's so important because if we're going to overcome our selfishness we need sound doctrine. We need to understand carefully what the word of God has to say so John 13, beginning in verse 31, “Therefore

when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now is the Son of Man,' speaking of himself, "glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." Do you think Jesus wants us to think about the matter of glorifying God? It was said five times in that text. Verse 33, "Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.' Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.' Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.'"

This morning as we continue our worship, that's what we want to think about. How are we doing individually and how are we doing as a church at meeting this new standard of love?

...

That song has such a beautiful picture of the benefit of the substitutionary death of Christ. The atonement meant that Jesus chose to wear the sinner's crown while he placed his crown on me. What a beautiful truth. Thank you for leading us.

I hope you, as I was reading earlier from John 13, I hope in part you had the sense of, "I can't believe I am allowed into that conversation," because that was an intimate discussion with Jesus and his remaining disciples and I hope you think about these verses sort of like a wet rag that needs to be wrung out to derive all the possible growth information and truth that we can possibly gain in order to take additional steps in overcoming our selfishness. So, let's think now about what we read and look for three lessons to help us grow in our love for those that the Lord has placed around us. Try not to make this ethereal or fuzzy. I want to encourage you to think of real people that God has placed right around you. What can we learn from what Jesus said?

First of all, loving others brings glory to God. I hope you're trying to picture what this conversation must have been like. Jesus had surprised his disciples by washing their feet and then by instructing them to follow his example by serving one another. Then, on the heels of that, there is this startling announcement that one of his own is going to betray him. Then, Judas' unexplained departure. Now John tells us that the theme and you really have to lock onto this, the theme of what Christ then says to those who remain is the issue of he and his Father being glorified. That concept is mentioned five times in two verses which is astounding in part for what's not said. The Lord doesn't dwell on the pain of Judas' betrayal though he could have done that or doesn't even magnify the horror of the cross, though he certainly could have done that. The focus is on what's about to be revealed. There it is: magnified. What's about to be manifested, to put on display. That's the meaning of the word "glorified." One standard lexicon defines the word like this: to

influence one's opinion about another so as to enhance the latter's reputation. You're glorifying that person. Or to cause to have splendid greatness. Here's the point: because of the pain and the horror of the cross, men and women will have a better understanding of important truths. Jesus is saying, "These truths are going to come into clearer focus. They'll be better understood." And that makes the pain and the suffering worth it. For what the intense tragedy will reveal and what it will teach about those who are enduring it.

Well, what did it teach? The cross taught important lessons about God the Son. Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified. Don't linger on Judas' treachery or even how you're not sure how you'll ever be able to wash the feet of your fellow disciples after I'm gone. This event," Jesus said, "is going to teach crucial truth about the Messiah so listen up." The Son of man is being glorified. There is much to be learned here about him." Like what? How is he being glorified? Well, teaching us that rejection will not stop him from loving. Later in Peter's second sermon in the book of Acts, he actually focuses on that particular point. Acts 3:13, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has," here it is, "glorified his servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and you disowned in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him." You see, it's one thing to wonder how the Messiah might respond if others mocked him or beat him or rejected him, it's something else to have the final answer. He faced that test. We never have reason to question that aspect of his character so, "the God of our fathers," Peter said, "is glorifying his servant." He's helping us to have a greater understanding of our Lord.

How else was Jesus glorified through the cross? He was willing to die for the penalty of our sin. Think for a minute about your sin. That's a pretty big pile, huh? And then think about this great verse, Colossians 2:14, "Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us and he has taken it out of the way, having," boom, "nailed it to the cross." If any of his disciples had ever wondered how much Jesus really loved them, that question is now being put to rest. Now the Son of man is glorified. We might have thought that about him before, now there is no question.

He also freed us from the power of our sin. You say, "I wonder if I can change?" You'd better believe it because of the cross. Paul said this in Romans 8, "For what the law could not do weak though it was through the flesh." Just piling on rules and regulations is not going to change you. "For what the law could not do weak though it was through the flesh God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin," boom, "he condemned sin in the flesh." So even as they were struggling with their own selfishness and their own agenda, the power of the Son of man is being glorified so now they're going to have a new understanding of the depth and the redemptive power of Christ's love for them which will eventually result in them having greater confidence that they can't, in fact, change. Which is why one of the worship songs that we sing talks about the wonderful cross. You say, "What a strange set of words to put together. How could the cross be wonderful?" Well, in part, because of how the Son was glorified on it. His character revealed in ways we could have never understood or appreciated before.

He also freed us from the terror of death. The writer of Hebrews said this, “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood he himself, likewise, also partook of the same that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil.” And if you know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and I don't want to be smug about this, I recognize that some have just experienced death in your own family. I don't want to minimize that in any way, shape or form but I do want to put that in balance with the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sting of death, the fear of death, is removed for a Christian.

I was coming back from Seattle late last night on a plane that in the sovereignty of God, went through some pretty hefty turbulence so people are getting nervous and all that kind of stuff on the plane. You know, it's interesting that doesn't bother me and if you've been in that situation, it probably doesn't bother you. Why? Because you know what's going to happen after you die. You're up there at 33,000 feet bumping all around, thinking, “Okay, what's going to happen if this thing goes down?” Here's the answer and I don't want to be trite about it but here's the answer: thump, heaven. There's the answer. That's the answer and I'm fairly certain it was rainy in Seattle and it was cold in Indianapolis and I was fairly certain the weather in heaven was a whole lot better.

So, it takes the terror of death away. You see, Jesus was glorified. There is no way we could have understood that power apart from the cross. Jesus went on to explain something else: someone else is being glorified here. The cross taught important lessons about God the Father. Jesus said after Judas left, he focused not on the betrayal of Judas, not on the pain of the cross, he focused on what was going to be accomplished by the cross. Now is the Son of man glorified and God the Father is glorified in him.

John MacArthur has a more thorough discussion of this point than time allows this morning. In fact, you might want to get his commentary on the gospel of John and follow along in this study that I'm doing but two observations that he makes about this phrase: 1. the cross demonstrates God's justice. Remember, Scripture says this, “The wages of sin is death. The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That's the polar opposite of what our adversary would want us to believe. That's the polar opposite of what our adversary told Adam and Eve in the Garden, “You will not surely die.”

No, somebody has to die. If God is just, somebody has to die. The cross proves that and frankly, a God who is unjust is not worthy of your allegiance. The cross glorifies the Father by demonstrating his justice. It also demonstrates his holiness. That is so true. In fact, MacArthur said this: “Never did God so clearly manifest his holy hatred for sin than in the suffering and death of his Son. The Father loves the Son with an infinite love yet when Jesus became a curse for” – think about this – in preparation for us celebrating what Christ did on our behalf, “yet when Jesus became a curse for believers on the cross, the Father whose eyes are too pure to approve evil and cannot look on wickedness with favor, turned away from him. That caused Jesus to cry out in agony, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.”

God's holiness was glorified by the cross as was his love. If you know any verse from the gospel of John, you know this one, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." You see, here's the overall point: Jesus was able to love his own and love them to the end, why? How did he do that? Because he looked beyond the rejection, he looked beyond the betrayal to what could be displayed, what could be revealed, what could be manifested by the cross. Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.

What's a take-away for us regarding this matter of loving our neighbors? The answer, friends, is: sacrificial love can glorify God today. Jesus taught this in the Sermon on the Mount, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and," what? "And glorify your Father who is in heaven." Here's a question to ponder: what if your best opportunity to glorify God involved you bearing some kind of cross in his name? What if your best opportunity to glorify God involved you bearing some kind of cross in his name? What if it involved you practically, not in some fuzzy ethereal way that never actually results in anything, what if it involved in you loving not people who are easy to love but people who are the polar opposite? What if your best opportunity to glorify God, to give others the right opinion about how loving he is, what if your best opportunity to glorify God involved you sacrificing to meet somebody else's needs? At a time that was not convenient to you? In a way that was distasteful to you? For people who didn't deserve it? Would you be willing to bear that cross if the potential was there to glorify God? Would you be willing to extend that kind of Christ-like love if it would give a better opinion to those around of what our God is like? And can you point to any specific evidence of choices you've made this week where that belief motivated you to specific action?

We've seen that loving others brings glory to God, that was clearly the initial emphasis of this text but then Jesus affirms in his discourse that loving others requires new life. I think it's really important to note the tenderness of this part of the discussion where Jesus refers to his disciples as little children which I realize for us might sound condescending, but in that culture would be a great endearment as he's trying to teach them. "Little children," he says, "I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.'" Then he gets to the crux of this matter and he says, "Love one another." Love one another and I can't overemphasize the intensity of that command that he gave to them and to us. Intense in these senses: he chose the strongest word possible in that language to talk about love, *agapao*. Sacrifice yourselves in order to meet the needs of others. It's also emphasized because of the prominent placement, the way this verse appears by John, placing this first in that particular phrase. What is being emphasized here is instead of jockeying for position in the kingdom or finding ways to make others serve you or help you achieve your self-centered agenda, here's what you're to do when I leave: love one another.

D. A. Carson said this, "The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and appreciate, profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it and put it into practice." Would we stand in that line? The new command is simple enough for a toddler to memorize and

appreciate, profound enough that the most mature believers are repeatedly embarrassed at how poorly they comprehend it or put it into practice.

Now, you might have wondered even as I was reading the text, why is it that Jesus would say that this was a new commandment? Isn't it true that the Bible had previously commanded us to love our neighbors? Absolutely, like 1,400 years earlier in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." That was said in the early history of the people of God so in what sense, I mean, did Jesus forget? Obviously not. In what sense was it new? That actually brings us to the point of this title. It's new because of the standard. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another," here it is, "even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." You see, this isn't something syrupy; it's not based on how we feel at the moment. It's certainly not because the other person deserves it; it's not because it's easy; it's not because it's convenient; it's not because it might be reciprocated right away. The standard is: love others as, even as I have loved you. Do it like he did.

What did Christ say would be the impact? "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus gave the world the right to judge his children. Do you realize that? You say, "My neighbors are always judging me." God gave them that right to judge his children on the basis of whether we're the real thing. And the most important question on the test is whether we love one another. Now, when we bring in parallel passages, it's not just a matter of loving other Christians, we're to love everyone. 1 Thessalonians 3:12, for example, "And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all people just as we also do for you." Or, Galatians 6:10, "So that while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people and especially to those who are of the household of faith," but to all people, so love one another even as I have loved you.

Well, what does that look like? Let's try to make that as practical as possible. What does that actually look like and I would encourage you to be evaluating yourself on how well you're doing at keeping this command. Well, it surely starts in the home, does it not? In fact, I would ask every person here to consider this question: is the place where you live a more loving environment because of your presence? If an unbelieving person followed you around in your home and you functioned the way you typically do, would that unbelieving person have a reason to conclude, "That person is a follower of Christ because they love their family members the way Jesus loved?" I would challenge all the children and all the teens who are hearing this message today to go home and ask your Mom or ask your Dad or ask both this question: what can I do to be a more loving daughter around here? "Mom, what can I do to be a more loving son?" I would encourage husbands to pose that question to their wives and wives to pose that question to their husbands. Children can pose that question to their parents and parents could pose that question to their children. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

What about the way you function at church? Did you come to the church house today in anticipation of the privilege and the opportunity to possibly show love to somebody else here? That's why you got here so early. That's why you were praying for people on the way over. You were asking God to give you opportunities to help make this a warm and friendly church, especially reaching out during times of sickness and sorrow and joy, asking forgiveness of your church members when you sinned against them and granting forgiveness when you've been sinned against. Love one another as I have loved you.

What about the way you choose to serve? I had the privilege as I was going and getting my mike early this morning to walk by a number of our children's ministry classrooms and there are people who are getting their rooms all set up, they're here on time, it didn't matter that they had to spring forward. They're not going to rob that hour from God, for crying out loud. So, there they are joyfully getting ready to minister to the children of this church. What does that tell you? What would motivate persons to minister to kids in that way? "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this all men will know that you are My disciples."

You know we're having this serve campaign where we're seeking to fill the children's ministry service opportunities for the coming year. Are you on that one? You might say, "Well, it's not convenient. It's not easy. Don't feel like it." No, no, no. You see, we're talking about glorifying God not you. We already know you. We're talking about glorifying God by letting him work in us a new kind of love and let's not be fuzzy about that. You don't grow in fuzzyland. Let's not be ethereal. That very well may be one of the take-aways where some of the people hearing this message today ought to run, not walk, to the Welcome Center after this message and sign up for children's ministries as a way of obeying exactly what Jesus has commanded us to do.

The way we function in our neighborhood, this is a calling for us to love those that God has placed around us. I realize you might say, "I'm not sure I can meet the test." You can't. Not on your own. That's the other sense in which this commandment is new because Jesus is referring back to Jeremiah 31, to the new covenant. Remember, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood," and if you know your Bible, you know that the new covenant meant that after Jesus died for our sin it would be possible for us to be transformed from the inside out and for the Holy Spirit to take up residence in us and change us in a dramatic and dynamic way. It's because of that identity, who we are in Christ, that we could move in a lifestyle or toward a lifestyle that is increasingly and proactively loving.

Now, at our church we practice open communion and what that means is that you don't have to be a member in order to participate. You only have to meet the requirements that are mentioned in Scripture: 1. that you know that you know that you know that you're on your way to heaven, and 2. that you've examined yourself and you've confessed any known sin to the Lord. In fact, perhaps for some of us in this confession time privately we maybe should ask God to forgive us for our lack of love. But after we've examined ourselves and confessed any known sin, then we can participate in a way that would honor the word and if you've done those things, please feel free to participate. If you're

not sure where you are, just pass them along. Nobody is going to judge you. This is a time of reflection between you and the Lord. Then, please come and wait on us now.

...

Don't you love that song? I recognize about this point in the discussion at least for some, maybe for many, you might say, "You know, Pastor Viars, I just can't do it. I can't do it. If you knew the kind of people that God has placed around me and all of their sinful habits and God's command for me...I can't do that." Or, "If you knew the depth of betrayal that I'm dealing with in my life and yet the cross of God has given me to bear is to fulfill a new commandment to love....I can't do that. I can't. I can't. I just can't." Well, here's what we'd say to that, "Yes you can." Yes you can because of the efficacy of what it is that we're observing this morning, my friends. Paul said it like this, "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ in me and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Let's not ever minimize the sanctifying power of our God and the hope that we ought to have in our ability to change because of his power.

You see, I mentioned the children's workers a minute ago who were faithfully serving today. They'll be embarrassed I even mentioned them but if you were to talk with them about that and just even thank them, it wouldn't be long before they would say, "Well, that's because of what Jesus is doing through me. That's because God has changed my heart. That's because of the power of my Savior working through me." I mentioned that we have several people in our church family right now who are going through really deep water because of a death in their family and many of them would say, "You know, it's really hard right now but it's just amazing how the church family has just marshaled around me and loved me and ministered to me and joined arms with me. They've loved me." Well, if you talk to the persons who took the time to make the contact or send the card or bring the meal or just whatever that love looked like, do you know what they would say, "Well, that's not because I wasn't busy and it's not because it comes natural but it's because of the power of Christ. It's because Jesus didn't just give a command, he gave the power to be able to keep it."

Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 11:23, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" You know, I think it's interesting and instructive to see how this passage ends. You believe that the word of God is inspired, right? And so it's all put together the way it is on purpose. Maybe we could summarize it like this: loving others involves a realistic assessment of your own strength.

Peter begins objection to what Jesus had said. He won't take no for an answer so Peter in characteristic fashion says, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." How terribly ironic that Peter would make such a proud boast to the person who was about to lay down his life for him. And think about the context: after seeing the example and the challenge of foot washing and then hearing the news about

someone who would betray them and then hearing this new command that they were to love as Jesus had loved them, that should have brought Peter to the end of himself, right? But instead he said that which is why Jesus then answered, “Will you lay down your life for Me?” Almost a mild fatherly “seriously? Seriously, Peter?” And if you and I would think about what we've heard thus far and conclude, “Hey, I’ve got this one. This loving my neighbor, I’ve got that one licked. I've got that one covered. I don't have to grow any more in that area.” Oh my.

So, Jesus had to explain, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.” And what's interesting is that for the rest of this discourse, Peter is uncharacteristically silent. We don't hear another peep from Peter throughout the rest of this text and we know, of course, that Peter did fail the Lord. He did deny him three times but you also know that at the end of the gospel of John, there is that beautiful occasion after Jesus is resurrected where Jesus cooks Peter a fish breakfast on the shore and then he invites Peter to come and he asks him a question three times to match the number of times he had denied him. What was the question? “Peter, do you love me? Do you love? Do you love me?” And Peter responds with a word for love that is less intense but what does Jesus then say? “If you love me, feed my lambs. If you love me, feed my sheep. If you love me, feed my lambs.” In other words, if you love me, prove that by going out and loving others.

Finally, Peter got that. We know that he got it for a lot of reasons including what he wrote in his epistle. He said this, “Knowing that you are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers but with precious blood.” He finally got that. “As of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ for he was foreknown before the foundation of the world but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God. Since you have in obedience to the truth, purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren,” hear this, “fervently love one another from the heart for you've been born again, not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and enduring word of God.”

Friend, if you're here this morning and you've never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, then we would encourage you to use this discussion of love that we know we can't fulfill on our own to cause you to acknowledge your sin and place your faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. For those of us who would call ourselves Christians, let's look to the power of the blood of our Savior, our resurrected Savior, to give us confidence, to give us encouragement, to give us hope, that it really is possible to take steps progressively over time of meeting this new command.