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“What’s the glue that holds us together?”

John 13: 31-35

Once Judas left, Jesus said,

“Now is the Chosen One glorified and God is glorified as well.

If God has been glorified, God will in turn glorify the Chosen One and will do so very soon.

My little children, I won’t be with you much longer.

You’ll look for me, but what I said to the Temple authorities, I say to you:

Where I am going, you cannot come.

I give you a new commandment:

Love one another.

And you’re to love one another the way I have loved you.

This is how all will know that you’re my disciples; that you truly love one another.”

SERMON

WHAT'S THE GLUE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER?

Traditional Kintsugi uses urushi lacquer,

URUSHI LACQUER is made from rice flour mixed with the sap of the east Asian lacquer tree.

The glue I use? Superglue.

Today - I ask you to hold the metaphor with me. We use what we have!

We use what we have - sometimes pretty meager resources, to bind things together.

Put our scripture in context:<sup>1</sup>

1. The context of this passage is John's account of Jesus' last supper with his disciples.
2. Earlier in chapter - we hear that about many things that Jesus *knows*, and about how he responds to the knowledge that he has -
  - a. **He knows** that his hour has come to depart from this world
  - b. How does he **respond**? "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (13:1b).
  - c. **He knows** that Abba God has given all things into his hands, and that he has come from God and is going to God (13:3).
  - d. How does he **respond**? He gets up from the table, wraps a towel around his waist, and washes his disciples' dusty, dirty feet.
3. Jesus also **knows** who is about to betray him is very troubled by this knowledge
  - a. How does he **respond**? He announces the imminent betrayal and then proceeds to feed the betrayer:

That all comes before our text. The conversation that continues after our reading has Jesus predicting Peter's denial of him.

Betrayal and denial bookend our scripture reading.

Our text begins, "When Judas had gone out, Jesus said... "

- b. We might expect a speech about how evil Judas is and how awful the consequences of his actions will be for him.
- c. But Jesus instead focuses on preparing his disciples for what is to come.

His parting words focus not on blame for their past and future failures,

but rather on **preparing them for what is to come.**

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<sup>1</sup> From [Working Preacher](#), Elisabeth Johnson

4. Jesus focuses on the need for his disciples to live in community, to love one another as he has loved them.

5. This “new commandment”—“that you love one another as I have loved you” —

Is found in 2 other places in Jesus’ teaching in John’s gospel. Earlier in this 13th chapter he said: “You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (13:13-15).

6. The “new commandment” is also paralleled in John 15:12-14: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

**7. These two parallels to today’s scripture help to flesh out the meaning of “loving one another.” On the one hand, loving one another as Jesus has loved encompasses the mundane; it means serving one another, even in the most menial tasks. On the other hand, this love encompasses heroic acts of great risk; it extends even to the point of giving one’s life for another.**

8. Jesus demonstrates his love for the same disciples who will fail him miserably.

a. Jesus washes and feeds Judas who will betray him,

b. Remains in relationship with Peter who will deny him.

- c. **The love that Jesus demonstrates is not based on the merit of the recipients, and Jesus commands his disciples to love others in the same way.**

9. Jesus could not be clearer: It is not by our theological correctness, not by our moral purity, not by our impressive knowledge that everyone will know that we are his disciples.

It is quite simply by our loving acts—acts of service and sacrifice, acts that point to the love of God for the world made known in Jesus Christ.

How are we the glue? How do we love one another - in mundane ways and in ways that ask us to sacrifice greatly?

STORIES ([IMAGES of stories](#))

Movie “The Best of Enemies”.<sup>2</sup>

True story. Two people who were on opposite sides of their communities were named co-chairs of a process that would decide the fate of their school system.

CP Ellis and Ann Atwater - Durham NC in the early 1970’s.

The head of the clan and a woman who stood beside many in the call for affordable, liveable housing, decent schools for their kids...

It involved the whole community. 12 decision makers were chosen - 6 white, 6 black. Ordinary folks who lived, worked, worshiped in that community.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Best\\_of\\_Enemies\\_\(2019\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_of_Enemies_(2019_film))

It cost some nearly everything...their own jobs, and the jobs of those they employed... their health, their community.

At times, the glue - love, asks everything of us.

*What does love look like?*

Recent article in Anabaptist World by Scott Sprunger - friend of my sons. Went to another Mennonite church in Lancaster - his article: "All I ask is an equal seat at the table"<sup>3</sup>.

Scott says the core of his religious experience as an adolescent was this: If I tell the truth about who I am, it will make me unlovable. It will disrupt the community that matters most to me...

Now, claiming his sexual orientation, following his call to ministry through seminary - now he says: All I ask is an equal seat at Christ's table.

Scott laments that the greatest obstacle queer Mennonites face comes not from the small but vocal contingent of openly homophobic Mennonites but from the **much larger group of moderates who are more committed to unity than to justice.**

He says there are no sides in this conversation. There is one body with many members.

When one member denigrates another, the whole body grows sick...

Only when the hurting member is healed can the body find wholeness (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Creating space at the table for all to have a voice -

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<sup>3</sup> [Anabaptist World](#)

Is this what Jesus meant when he said ‘ love one another the way I have loved you...This is how all will know that you’re my disciples’

*What does love look like?*

Last week I went on a wildflower walk offered through Clearwater conservancy...

Met “Lee” - gender fluid. Dressed somewhat like a goth - tight jeans, big belt, clunky boots, yet they were light on their feet, literally dancing, in their own world, joy radiating as they talked about a new found love of birds and flowers.

We were bent over a little blue flower, puzzling over what it might be, waiting for iNaturalist to give us some clues. They pointed to a photograph in his field guide -”I think it’s a Veronica”, they said, and went on - I love that name!

What do you love about that name?, I asked.

With such sincerity he told me these flowers are named after the woman who gave her veil to Jesus so he could wipe the blood, sweat and spit from his face while he was carrying the cross, and that some people think the flower looks like that. Isn’t that beautiful, he asked me?

Yes. It was beautiful in so many ways. This connection, this sharing a moment together, on our knees, gazing at a flower named Veronica, named after a woman who did a small act of love thousands of years ago.

I stuck with Lee the rest of the walk. They were a delight to learn with, to hear about their work and education. I didn’t do anything - no acts of service on my part, yet there’s something about that interaction that has stuck with me, and continues to put a smile on my face. We saw each other as persons deserving of love and respect - and I, at least, was surprised by what I experienced.

Lee showed me a bit about love last week.

What does living out this new commandment look like for us?

Check in - what do you need to feel welcomed here, in our sanctuary?

Is it putting on a mask to support another? Is it having someone to sit next to?

This is love in action - creating a sanctuary, a safe place, for us all. It requires us to lean in, toward one another.

Jesus' showed the disciples that the glue that would hold them together - a broken community in need of healing - the glue is love. Love done in mundane acts like stooping down and washing feet, maybe asking a few questions and listening with curiosity; and love in the act of laying down our lives - taking a stand against injustice; speaking up.

How might you be the glue? How might we be the glue?