

“Not This Man”
Good Friday Service
April 7, 2023
Pastor John Mars

Jesus said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all people know that you are my disciples, by the way you love one another.”

Thursday night he spoke these words. Friday morning he did that (pointing at the cross). “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all people know you are my disciples, by the way you love one another.” Earlier that week, Jesus’ disciples had been arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. And Jesus said to them, “If you want to be great in my kingdom, you must be a servant. And if you want to be the greatest, you must be the slave of everyone.” And then he demonstrated it, by washing the disciples’ feet. The night he was betrayed, he said, “A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all people know you are my disciples, by the way you love one another.” That’s what he said. And that’s what he did (pointing at the cross). “This is how you love one another.” He said it. And then he demonstrated it.

I can’t imagine what Jesus endured, the humiliation. Josephus, the Jewish historian, said that Jesus of Nazareth was barely recognizable as a man before he was crucified. I can’t imagine the rejection that he felt when the Jewish leaders, the people that should have recognized who he was from scripture, when they had the opportunity to have him freed, said, “Not this man. Not this man. Give us a criminal instead.” I cannot imagine what Jesus endured when he had to experience sin for the first time. The one who had never known sin became sin on our behalf. And we haven’t even talked about the pain. This is what Jesus endured to fulfill the old covenant, establish the new covenant, pay the price for our sins and satisfy the law, and to show us what love looks like. Certainly, the resurrection is the power of love. But it is the cross that symbolizes love.

When Jesus died, another one of his pains was that no one believed. Oh yes, there were admirers. There were followers. But no one believed. You see, death undermined his claims. No one dreamed of continuing the movement. Why bother? When your Messiah is a dead body, hanging on a Roman cross, covered in sweat, blood, urine and feces, it’s over. And that was Friday night. Jesus knew all of this would happen. He had told them he was going to die but they didn’t believe it. That wasn’t their idea of the kingdom. He knew they could not hear what he was saying. He knew that they could not conceive of Sunday. And on Friday, all their hopes died.

Today, what I want you to hear, what I want you to know is: I want you to hear Jesus saying to you, “This is how much I love you. This is how much I love you. This is how much I want you to love.” I want to leave you with those words: “This is how much I love you and this is how much I want you to love.”

There’s really no way to end this service except in silence. I’m not going to ask you to stand. I’m not going to ask you to pray. I’m going to ask you to be quiet. I want you to contemplate how much Jesus loves you, and how much Jesus wants you to love like he

loved. And when you feel you have sufficiently contemplated, I ask you to leave in silence.