

³⁴I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

How simple is that?

Remember the hymn.....

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

And we pray that our unity will one day be restored

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love

Yeah they'll know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side

We will work with each other, we will work side by side

And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love

Yeah, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

So simple.....

We hear these words today. But how do we hear them? They are familiar, we have heard this all many times before, it is easy to let the words glide past our consciousness as easy thought. We can hear them in a legalistic way to make us march forward with them and create new pressure on ourselves and those around us. We can really not hear them at all as we are lost in our own thought process

and planning. Do they really tell us anything new after all? But these words are at the base of our mission with Christ. They should be important to all of us every time we hear them.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a great author and theologian and was a prisoner of the Germans in world war II. He was in a concentration camp and was struggling with how to love as Jesus taught. How to love his enemies; and he stated that the answer he found was to, and I Quote “throw yourselves into the arms of God. Throw yourselves into the hands of Jesus. And then you might actually learn to love an enemy. Then you might pray for those who curse you. Then you can know what it is like to be blessed.”

Our presiding Bishop Michael Curry was wrestling with that thought. He gathered a group to take some concentrated time to work and pray about that with him. He asked them “How do we help our folks throw themselves into the arms of Jesus?” The group struggled and prayed and struggled some more and came up with an answer. They decided the ancient monastics and saints had the right idea all along. There was nothing new to invent.

We here at Zion explored that answer during our Lenten program this year. Bishop Curry outlined that answer in a sermon he gave at General Convention in 2018. He posed the question, “what would happen if we asked every Episcopalian to adopt what we are calling The Way of Love: Practices for a Jesus-Centered life” Then he goes on to ask what do we seek with all this. “We seek love, because we all just want to be loved. We were made by God and God is love, “so we were made to love and be loved.” “We seek freedom: every child of God was meant to breathe free; and we seek abundant life, not bargain-basement life but the real thing.” In other words, “we seek Jesus.” (The Way of Love p 28, 29, 30

So how can we make this work for us here at Zion Church. How can we make this work for each of us in our own hearts and homes? Well, we should become spiritual athletes or musicians....well sort of...(not speaking from personal athletic or musical experience here.) what is the first thing an athlete must do to do well in any sport or a musician at their craft? Practice, practice, practice. It is not a once a week thing, you will never get to the Olympics or to a great concert hall if you practice once a week. It is not a whenever we think of it thing, that shows no real discipline at all. It is a daily thing; with some folks it is even more often. If you explore our prayer book you will find services to use morning, noon, evening and at the close of the day.

Bishop and his group showed us a discipline, a rule of life to guide our own practice. We are to turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go, and rest. They ask us to turn, to pause, listen and move away from the negative in our lives and follow Jesus. Learn: Read and learn from scripture each day to help us know Jesus teachings. Pray: to focus and spend some time with God each day. Worship in communion with others at least weekly. Bless by sharing our faith and to unselfishly give and serve as best we can. Go, cross boundaries, get out of our comfort zone and live like Jesus. Put His teachings to work in our own lives. And then rest, take time to receive the gift of god's grace, peace and restoration. Even God rested on the seventh day. Then do all this again and again and again.

Practice, practice, practice

³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

So simple.