

8 April 2020
Holy Wednesday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

Holy Wednesday Meditation
Text: John 13:16-38

Love one another.

Such a simple command, yet so hard to do. So many things get in the way. Selfishness, anger, bitterness, hurt, jealousy, greed, pride, weariness, busyness, laziness, fear. Jesus is about to show them what love looks like: **the cross**. He will be betrayed, but He will love. He will be denied, but He will love. He will be abandoned, but He will love. He will love them to the end. He will give all that He is and all that He has. His love will let Him do no less.

What do you think of when you think of love? What does it look like? Maybe it looks like a wedding day, and the joy and happiness. Maybe it looks like a couple holding hands while walking together. Or does it look like a parent holding their newborn for the very first time? For Jesus, it looks like **the cross**. Love is the complete giving of yourself for another. And it may be hard and it may be messy and may demand a lot from you. It will include forgiveness, for when that love is not returned - or, at least, not in the way you think it should. Love is not just something you feel or say but do. And Jesus is now going to do it. As He has all along. As God, from the beginning of time to the end of time. As man, from His birth to His death. What does love look like? For Jesus, *bloody*.

Love one another. Peter wants to love. He wants to love Jesus. He wants to follow Him everywhere - even to death. But Jesus knows He is not able. When faced with death, Peter's love will fail. He will deny. And not just once or twice, but three times. Once is maybe an accident. Twice maybe weakness. But the third time Peter calls down curses on himself from heaven. He is staunch. He is defiant. He is sinner.

But Jesus will be on the cross for him, and for those three denials. Jesus will bleed for Peter's deed. And for Judas' betrayal. And for all your sins and failures to love, too. He will do what we are unable to do: love. Jesus will love them to the end. And beyond.

And now He calls on us to do the same. ***Love one another.*** Bear the cross for one another. The cross in our marriages, in our homes, in our church, at school, at work, for family, neighbors, friends, strangers, even enemies. But how can we, right? We're sinners. Our love is imperfect. On our *best* days our love fails. How can we possibly do this?

On our own, we can't. We've fallen and we can't get up. But we're not on our own. Not the disciples nor us. For as Jesus told them in the words we heard tonight: ***Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*** This is the Trinity in action, in love, for you and me. When you were baptized, you received the one Jesus sent, and so you also received Jesus. And in receiving Jesus you receive the Father. All of God, given to you. All His love, given to you. So you now have something to give to others. Not your love, but His love. Not your love that falls short, but His love that never does.

So when Jesus says ***love one another***, that is not something to do apart from Him, but in Him and with Him. Apart from Him, we look and act like Judas and Peter. We betray and deny and fail. But Jesus restored Peter. Forgave him. He would have Judas, too. But Judas took matters into his own hands. And He forgives you, too. Because He loves you. Because He went to the cross for you. Because He comes even now for you. Perfect love, that never ends.

Tomorrow night we'll remember that Jesus gives us bread, too. Not to mark us as betrayers, but to give us His forgiveness. He will love us to the end. But since He has promised us a world without end, we also will receive His love without end, and life without end.

What does love look like? Tomorrow we enter the Sacred Triduum - the last three days of this Lenten season. And we will see what love looks like, and sounds like. We'll see the cross, we'll hear His forgiveness, and we'll rest. In His love.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.