

“If you love me, you’ll...”

Intro. There are many well-known speeches in history. Some we had to memorize in school and others we remember because they touched our heart and soul. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address that in the middle of a terrible civil war recalled the founding of our country in liberty and equality for all. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech about the dream he had for all people to be free. These are but a couple of examples of speeches that tell us about the character and values of the person who spoke the words worth remembering.

I. The words of the Gospel we hear today were spoken by the Lord at the last meal with his disciples. By washing their feet he showed them an example of the attitude of a servant for them to

follow. He told them how that would happen: they were to love one another in the same way *he* loved *them*. If they did that, it would be a clear sign to the world they were his disciples. Those were revolutionary attitudes for that time. Life was difficult because it was pretty much everyone for themselves. His disciples would stand out from the crowd as women and men who took care of one another. *If* they could do it. The wonderful world John spoke of in the reading from Revelation is not here yet. We know loving one another is difficult. Not a day goes by that we don’t think or say something unkind about someone. I recently saw a story about a man who killed another man while driving drunk. The dead man’s sister did everything she could to make sure that man paid for taking the life of her brother. All through the trial and

sentencing she was there. As the years went by she struggled with the pain of her brother's death and her anger. Finally she decided to go to the prison and see the man. He was terrified when he heard she asked to see him, but he agreed to meet her. When she asked him why he did it, he said he was young and stupid, but it was no excuse. He deeply regretted what he did. To his utter amazement, she forgave him and even hugged him. Every year since then, she visits him. That to me is an example of loving another person as the Lord loves us. It didn't come easily. She struggled a long time to finally get to that place. The man was still serving his time but he was a different man.

Concl. We sometimes use the line, "If you love me, you'll do this for me." How different the way the Lord said it, "This is how all will know that you are

my disciples, *if* you have love for one another." He doesn't say it is how we *prove* we love him. *It's by loving one another* that we show we are his disciples. There is a *big "IF"*. It was the challenge the Lord gave his friends just before he died for them. It is the same challenge to us today. We gather for prayer and worship to celebrate the life of Jesus and renew the challenge he gave us. Following the Lord is not a good deed done every now and then or on Fridays of Lent. For disciples, loving one another as the Lord loves us is a *lifestyle*, a way of living that permeates our whole being every day. **It reflects the values of the Lord who spoke the words, as well as the values of those who live them out.**

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