

Sunday May 15, 2022
Fifth Sunday of Easter
Parishioner Reflection

By: Gerry Mackrell

There are many connotations of the word love in my dictionary. For the purposes of these readings, I will rely on the words of God to provide the precise meaning. There is nothing self-serving about the word love, particularly when given as a command.

John 13:34

Before the Passover Jesus knew that His time had come to depart this world and go to the Father. During supper, and after Judas had left the room Jesus addressed the remaining eleven. "Little children, I am with you only a little longer. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

His time had come. Jesus had spent three years preparing His apostles for just this moment. They were with Him as He performed many miracles, healing the sick, raising the dead, calming the storms, and feeding the hungry. The greatest miracle of all was His ability to feed their hungry spirit. His love for man was such that despite our original sin or subsequent rejection of Him, Jesus was about to become the sacrificial lamb for our redemption, this is the love that Jesus meant when He reminded them of the first commandments. The love of God means giving, even when it is difficult, it was never a suggestion, it was always a commandment. The teaching phase for the apostles is almost over. Armed with knowledge and a purpose for life, they were now ready to take up the baton from Jesus. The commandment to love will evidence their discipleship.

Acts 14:21

Paul, a man determined to eradicate the followers of Christ from the face of the earth, well educated, a prolific writer and thinker, had a sudden change of heart while travelling to Damascus. He was stopped abruptly on his mission of death by God Himself in the form of a brilliant light. God asked him. "Why are you doing these things Paul?" Struck blind for a period of days gave Paul time to think of the question posed by God. This call from God and later the love, understanding and forgiveness of the followers of Jesus, those he had once sworn to eradicate. As a

result of these encounters Paul became a lover rather than a hater. Now an apostle of Christ, he literally gave his life to spreading the news of the gospels. He spent the rest

of his life travelling from Rome to Jerusalem and all places in between, spreading the love and message of Christ. We may never experience such a dramatic call from God, but call He will, and His first command to us will be. "Love one another as I have loved you, by this everyone will know that you are my disciples."

Revelations 21:1

John writes, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heavens and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. He goes on to say, I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. In John's vision he was in the void after time, gone were all created things, the cosmos was no more. Out of heaven he saw the beautiful city of saints descending, the indescribable love emanating from the city was beyond words. John could only describe what he saw in earthly terms, he likened it to a bride adorned for her husband, beautiful and filled with love.

God's commandment of love (adhered to) is so powerful that change is inevitable. A metamorphosis both in body and spirit will effect a change in us. Just like Paul, we too will notice this difference in a very tangible way. Like John in Patmos, maybe we too will experience this indescribable love.

The commandment to love cannot be taken lightly. It is life.