

March 28, 2024 – Maundy Thursday

“Agape Love” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: John 13:1-35

One night, a man decided to show his wife how much he loved her.

After dinner he began to recite romantic poetry, telling her he would climb high mountains to be near her, swim wide oceans, cross deserts in the burning heat of day, and even sit at her window and sing love songs to her in the moonlight.

After listening to him go on for some time about this immense love he had, she ended the conversation when she asked, "But will you do the dishes for me?"

When the Lord Jesus said to his disciples “Love one another as I have loved you”, he wasn’t talking about a romantic, idealistic type of love, he was talking about the Agape Love, which is God’s perfect, unconditional, sacrificial love that focuses on the wellbeing of others.

Agape love, the highest form of love, is referenced in the New Testament 137 times as a verb and 116 times as a noun. It is a very important word in the Bible. This agape Love, when it is put into action, amazes us and surprises us. But this kind of love is something that has to be learned and the best person to learn it from is our Lord Jesus.

What would Jesus do? It is a popular question among Christians. The answer is to love us with the agape love, the perfect love that focuses on the wellbeing of others.

A good example of how to grow into that kind of love is the disciple Peter. In this Gospel we are told of the story of the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples the night of His arrest. He washed His disciples’ feet as a sign of a humble service to one another regardless of who we are and who the other is and as the perfect example of how we are to love one another.

When Jesus came to Peter, Peter refused to let the Lord Jesus wash his feet, and it was at that moment that Jesus said to Peter, *“Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”*

For Peter to understand the agape love that Jesus had for him, he had to be open to it: open to receive it, to experience it, to feel what that love is like.

He had to see the Lord Jesus, the one he called his Rabbi, his teacher, the one he once declared to be the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, kneel before him, take his dirty feet. (That is the reason why the Lord washed them before supper; the washing of feet was a practical ritual done to the guests who wore sandals and walked on dusty roads and was performed only by the servants or slaves of the house). Then Peter saw the clean water that Jesus poured onto Peter's feet turn murky and felt the soft touch of the towel drying his feet.

So, Peter saw how the Son of the Living God took the place of a servant, the place of a slave, to show him what agape love looks like. But that was not all. The day after, Jesus picked up a cross and laid down his life so that Peter, the rest of the disciples and the entire humankind would have eternal life. This teaches us that the agape love is not just action. Agape love is sacrificial action and as we learn from the example of our Lord Jesus, agape love always pays a price. That love always costs something. It is a very expensive love. When your agape love benefits the wellbeing of others, love gives; it doesn't take. When the Lord Jesus said to His disciples "*Love one another as I have loved you,*" he was talking about this kind of love.

Each of us has a clear image of who we are. In that image we see that what we lack in one virtue we excel in another, and that alone should be a good reason for us to always be humble. Some people may be very generous but may not be willing to walk and be present with those he or she is generous to.

Others may be empathetic to the suffering of others but may not be willing to engage in the healing of their suffering. I would like to quote the favourite phrase of one of my friends who says, "I am not perfect, but I am all right." We are all right because we can still try. Even with our own weaknesses, virtues and faults, we are still God's children.

We may not fully know the agape love, or the humbleness or the attitude to serve others the way our Lord Jesus did. From what we know about Peter and the rest of the disciples, they didn't know it either, but the teachings and example of Jesus inspired them to learn. That is how they too became an example to others. They became known as a community of Jesus' disciples who loved one another the way that our Lord Jesus loved them.

Now it is our turn to try our best to learn how to love others with the agape love, how to be humble and how to serve others the way our Lord Jesus did. May the Holy Spirit help us to do so. **Amen.**