

Love One Another

✠ for God's glory (vv.31-32)

✠ for our good (vv.33-35)

In the Name of Jesus, our loving Lord and Savior, dear fellow servants of God and each other:

Is it “kitty-wampus” or “catty-wampus”? My eyes, I mean. One points one way, this another. Without any biological connection my stepfather's eyes were similar. He told stories of working the service counter at the lumber yard and confusing customers. One thought he was talking to her, but then he'd switch eyes – back and forth just to confuse people. Such fun! He fit right into our family.

Now imagine a huge door with crowds streaming in. A man is motioning people away. pointing over there. He shouting, but you can barely hear him: “Don't come in here! Go over there to....” But the last is lost in the crowd. You look over there and a lesser crowd is streaming into a somewhat smaller door. And another man is pointing them away. “Don't come in here! Go over there to....”

Look closer. The sign above the really big door says, “Works.” The sign over the smaller big door says, “Faith.” Paul is pointing away from “Works.” James points away from “Faith.” Many theologians still insist Dr. Martin Luther hated James because he called James' Bible book “an epistle of straw.” But Luther always included James in his German translations. Luther quoted from Paul and James as Holy Scriptures. Few notice the tiny middle door between them. It says, **Love One Another**.

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Both James and Paul are pointing away from the broad, easy doors, left or right to the tiny middle door. Very few find it because the way is steep and rocky. It's so narrow, you can only go through one at a time. So low, you have to get down on your knees. Much like when husband and wife argue themselves into that tiny little box, each accusing the other, “You don't love me!” “You don't respect me!” Two sinners each accusing the other of sin? Only one way out, through the tiny door, one at a time, on your knees. The two preachers are saying, “Don't come in here! Go over there to Jesus.”

When we go to Jesus, we find complete unity between the prophets and the apostles and every faithful preacher. Our Lord in this text is in the upper room with His disciples. It's “Command Thursday,” or, “Maundy Thursday,” if you prefer the traditional Latin. Jesus the Master just washed His disciples' feet, then said, “*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*” (John 13:14–17 NIV84)

But before our Lord can explain further, Peter wants to know who will betray Jesus. So Jesus identifies Judas as His betrayer. Our text is actually in the NIV84 section entitled, “Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial.” So much for **Love One Another**! So much for **God's glory**! They all claimed **Love**!

Jesus literally told Judas, “*What you are about to do, do more quickly.*” (EHV¹) Jesus would lovingly give up His life for us on the cross – at God's time and place. Then *when [Judas] was gone, Jesus said* something to shine the light on the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here in John (13:32), the Holy Spirit is pointing to God's *glorification* in all Three Persons by the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ. The Father *will be glorified* in the Son because Jesus' death and resurrection

¹ EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version, translation slated for publication (NT, Psalms) October, 2017, by the Wartburg Project.

display the Father's independent, invincible **Love** for sinners. Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, *will glorify God Himself in Himself* by paying the ultimate price in self-sacrifice. God the Holy Spirit *will glorify Jesus immediately* by using this message to warm cold hearts with the Good News of sins forgiven.

“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) God's glory is to love sinners like Judas and Peter, me and you. Jesus kept trying to get through to Judas with His all-forgiving **Love** until Judas cut himself off by suicide. Peter repented. You and I are here in repentance today too. We're one-by-one on our knees at that narrow middle door to be saved not by our works, but totally and alone in the mercy and merits of Jesus Christ. God is glorified when we trust what He has done for us instead of trying to varnish the ruby of God's grace by our feeble works. Here is where we find peace and rest in what God has done for us, not in what we try to do for God. ***“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*** (1 John 4:16 NIV84) No matter how easy that popular door of “Works” appears, eternal death and fire are on the other side. Look to Jesus Christ alone. Don't wrap yourself in filthy rags. Take Jesus' shining robes. “Come in here!” cries Wisdom at the tiny door labeled: **Love One Another. All for God's glory** and...

✠ for our good (vv.33-35)

If our spiritual eyes were only “kitty-wampus,” maybe we'd have a chance. But God's Word, the Bible, tells us we are born dead and blind. “Catty-wampus” would be like zombie movies – *Zombie Apocalypse, Fear of the Walking Dead*. A little Google search will give you all sorts of advice about how you can survive a zombie apocalypse, including the little tidbit that you'll have to set aside your moral compass. All good fun? Like that video that went viral? Two brothers were convincing their sister on the way home from the doctor that they had to take major measures to survive a zombie apocalypse. Her pain killers had not worn off. The radio guy said, “It was mean – but hilarious.” What's terribly mean is how Satan takes blessings like entertainment and distracts the living from the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.

Rise above the death of morals. Rise by faith to new life in Christ. James is not pointing to “Works” as if they can save. James is pointing away from the broad easy door of dead “Faith” without works. According to all of Scripture, including Paul and in Luther's faithful preaching, ***“Faith without works is dead.”*** (James 2:26) Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone. You can't come to church and say, “I have faith,” then go home and ignore your neighbor's needs, or refuse to help at church, or rob God of tithes and offerings. Dead faith can't save you any more than walking and eating brains saves zombies.

Our society is so sick and disgusting, dying so quickly before our eyes. Don't just survive, come to Jesus by faith in Him and thrive. ***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*** (Ephesians 2:8–10 NIV84) Good works are necessary, but not for salvation. They are evidence of faith.

While doing good works that God created you to do, listen to Jesus: ***“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*** It's not *new* chronically, because God has been saying this from the beginning. But it is *new* in the sense that God's **Love** in Christ through you for others is renewing and invigorating for them and you. Yes, it feels good to give God the firstfruits. I love writing my first check for God because it helps others hear God's Word and come to life by faith in Jesus. Then their good works of **love** grow like fruit on a tree, feeding the hungry, not just physically, but spiritually in Sunday School and Bible Class, opening more missions to proclaim God's grace in Christ.

Yesterday in the store a husband and wife caught my eye. They must have been married a long time, but still they were smiling at each other. ***“Love covers over a multitude of sins.”*** (1 Peter 4:8) Don't

veer off to the broad and easy door on either side, but follow God's Word to the narrow, middle door through Christ. **Love One Another – for God's glory, for our good.** Lord of **Love**, live in us! Amen.