



**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2025**

***The Fifth Sunday of Easter***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 13.31-35**

**The New Commandment**

<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, "Where I am going, you cannot come." <sup>34</sup> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

**Other Readings: Acts 11.1-18**

**Psalm 148**

**Revelation 21.1-6**

**Homily: *I am making everything new!***

**Introduction**

*He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21.5)*

The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ were turning points in history as "*HIS story*" provided the way for us to have a relationship with God the Father. A few years ago the abbreviations generally used to indicate how historians had divided time or eras were categorised as:

- BC (Before Christ) and
- AD (Anno Domini, Latin for "in the year of the Lord")

Although these terms have now been 'rebranded' to BCE, Before the Common Era, and CE, Common Era, they still use the birth of Jesus as that fixed point in history before which some events happened, (BCE), and after which everything else happened, (CE). From a Christian point of view there is an end to the old and a coming of the new in moving from BC or BCE to AD or CE. In the book of Revelation, John the Apostle writes about the establishment of a *new heaven* and *new earth*, not just pie in the sky when you die, but here now, this side of the grave, as illustrated in the Lord's Prayer:

*May your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

The reading from Acts reflects this monumental shift which caused great debate in the First Century Church in Jerusalem. A gospel message once restricted to the Jewish nation was to be proclaimed to all humanity, both Jews and Gentiles. This was revealed in a dream to the Apostle Peter in Joppa, a port now called Jaffa. This revelation was later confirmed when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentile believers in Caesarea once Peter had made the 30 mile trip north.

We continue with the making everything **new** theme in the gospel reading, with a **NEW** commandment from Jesus, who was about to die.

### **Love one another**

Advertisers rely upon the fact that we like new things such as “New improved Daz” that is so much better than the old stuff, that we have to buy it. However, the *new* quickly becomes old in this rapidly changing society, characterised by how quickly mobile phones become obsolete and no longer fit for purpose.

And this is also the danger when we look at this “**new**” commandment. Many will have heard dozens of homilies on this Golden Rule of life to love one another. Had you been in the first century church in Ephesus you may have seen a now elderly Apostle John being carried into the meeting on a stretcher, with only one message:

*“love one another, because it is the Lord’s command and if this only is done, it is enough.”*

This story was recorded by a 4<sup>th</sup> century theologian Jerome, and a couple of centuries later, Dorotheos, Abbot of Gaza would illustrate the incredible challenge of this once New Commandment:

*Do not do evil to your neighbour, do not offend him, do not slander him, do not speak evil of him, do not belittle him, do not reproach him and in this way you will begin with time little by little, to do good also to your brother (or sister), consoling him by words, being compassionate to him or giving him what he needs.*

This practical advice broke down **love** into small tasks or changes of behaviour characterised by what we say and do. He compares these small changes to climbing rungs on a ladder

*By this way, we go up the ladder of righteousness one step at a time, until finally with God’s help we reach the top.*

### **Application**

And so to today, 2000 years later, is the command to **Love one another** still new to us?

The apostle Paul writes:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a **new** creation. The old has passed away. Behold the **new** has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Much has changed across the generations, and some have turned their backs on community activities including church going. The church, through history, has been a place where believers turn the Golden rule from theory to practice.

It was refreshing to hear of church growth amongst Gen Z, (15 to 25 year-olds), as reported on Christian author Pete Greig’s website and also in a recent article in the Church Times, (8 April). Much closer to home was this headline in the Grimsby Telegraph on the 29<sup>th</sup> April:

### **Vicar with vision grows Grimsby church congregation from five to 250 people.**

*“Putting the needs of the community first and welcoming people from all walks of life has grown its congregation from just five people to 250 people in three years”*

This is a real *Good News Story*, an encouragement for us to “put ourselves out there”, demonstrating the love of God in all we do and say. And we cannot do it on our own, but with God’s help, through the Holy Spirit, we can live out His Law of Love.

### Conversation Questions

1. **Kind heart and kind words.** Are there any areas of speech, where we need to reconsider what we say about others, in the light of the teaching from Dorotheos in the 6<sup>th</sup> century?
2. **Kind Actions.- Hospitality.** Are there new opportunities to practice hospitality this month?  
*Hospitality is one of the marks of the early church. Jesus was always going to people’s homes and his teaching often happened around the dinner table. or in a living room. The early church ate and met in each other’s homes. (Common Prayer: A liturgy for Ordinary Radicals – Marks of New Monasticism)*
3. Do you have a *Good News Story* about work your church is doing in the local community that would encourage others? If so, do get in touch with Steve Tune the Diocesan Communications Officer via [steven.tune@lincoln.anglican.org](mailto:steven.tune@lincoln.anglican.org)
4. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
5. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

### Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

### Collect of the day

Almighty God,  
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us  
you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help  
we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Risen Christ,  
your wounds declare your love for the world  
and the wonder of your risen life:  
give us compassion and courage  
to risk ourselves for those we serve,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is incorporated in this service paper, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council, 2000. Scripture passage from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised) copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.