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Text: John 13:31-36

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Easter 5

### LOVE THAT MAKES ALL THINGS NEW

In the reading from Revelation 21, Jesus says, "I am making all things new." And he is! And isn't that what we want?

We seem to tire so easily of the ordinary in life. We are constantly looking for something new, something exciting. We want to have the latest of everything, the latest style, the latest electronic equipment, the latest toys. We are certainly living in times of rapid change. Have you ever purchased an item one week, only to find a new and improved version available the next week?

I don't think that is what Jesus is talking about when he said, "I am making all things new." He had something much bigger, much better, more lasting in mind. What he had in mind was nothing short of a new heavens and a new earth! The vision of this new creation that we have in today's reading from Revelation is staggering. It is talking about all of reality. It is talking about the loving union between God and people. It is talking about a time of unending happiness. That is totally different from getting a new pair of designer jeans or a new ipad.

So how do we get this new life? Is this vision of "all things new" just "pie-in-the-sky," wishful thinking, something that is only in the distant future? Or is it possible to experience this new existence right now?

First of all, I want to make it clear that the day is coming when there will be a new heaven and new earth, full and complete and encompassing all of reality. God's new world will happen! And so, on the one hand, we can say that the fullness of this vision lies in the future.

But having said that, I also want to make it clear that it is possible to experience this newness right now. We can live it now - at least in part.

So how does it happen? Jesus tells us in the Gospel reading, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another." It is as simple as that. God's vision of a new heaven and a new earth starts with love. And that is something we can do.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, the old order has passed away. We have entered a new age. This doesn't mean, though, that life will be totally perfect. We are not living in utopia. It is within our power, however, to fashion a world, a country, a neighborhood, a church, a family where there is genuine love for one another and sincere concern for the well-being of all.

We have a long way to go, though. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons wrote a book in 2007 called *UnChristian; What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity*. The book states how an overwhelming percentage of sixteen to twenty-nine year olds view Christians with hostility, resentment and disdain.

This is based upon the experiences people have had with Christians. According to the book, people outside the church describe Christians as judgmental, hypocritical, out of touch with reality, insensitive to others.

That may not be the way we see ourselves, but that is the way other people see us. Don't you think it is time to change that image? Jesus tells us how to do it. "Love one another," he says. And he says, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This is radical stuff! This isn't just being nice and smiling on Sunday morning. This isn't just associating with people who are like us. This isn't just loving people who are lovable. No, the love Jesus is talking about, the love through which Jesus is making all things new is agape love, tough love, committed love, sacrificial love. It is the kind of love Jesus has for us. It is the kind of love which associates with sinners. It is the kind of love which forgives us, even when we are at our worst. It is the kind of love that hangs in there with us no matter what. It is the kind of love which sent Jesus to the cross.

The love Jesus is talking about, the love which makes all things new, is a love which loves those who are hardest to love. It is a love of those who differ from us. It is a love of those who need us. It is loving the people in Haiti. It is loving the orphan. It is loving the people who come to our food pantry. It is loving the poor. It is loving the sick, the handicapped, the dying. It is loving the least of these.

The love Jesus is talking about, the love which makes all things new, is a love which opens doors that we have closed against others. It is a love that responds to cries for help. It is a love which forgives the mistakes and wrongs that others make. It is a love which encompasses all people. It is through this kind of love that Christ is making all things new.

There is nothing easy about this love. If we are honest, we must admit that we need help to love this way. So let us pray. "Dear God, help us to love. Help us to love the way you love. Help us to love in such a way that all will know that we are disciples of Jesus. Amen."