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assisted by resources from  
*Spill the Beans*  
<http://spillbeans.org.uk>

## **Gathering with God.** *If you wish, light a scented candle if you have one, and say:*

We light this candle, the warmth of the Presence of God in our midst. Today, many candles are lit, in various homes - but the light is the same: Jesus is the Light of World and we remember this light during these times of darkness.

## **Foot Washing**

*If you are self-isolating with others, you may like to say aloud the following prayer and wash one another's feet (or hands):*

This is the water,  
 full of stories,  
 a pensieve of holy memories  
 that call us into a new relationship  
 of serving each other  
 and in such an act  
 may we find the saviour kneeling,  
 welcoming,  
 calling us  
 towards each other  
 through the water  
 of the servant Saviour.

So come as you are  
 as you feel comfortable to do so  
 and sit in the seats by the bowl  
 and have water poured over hands  
 or feet  
 a symbol of where we are  
 and where Jesus is  
 in the great picture of salvation  
 serving others  
 as he gives of himself,  
 servant Messiah  
 and companion on the way.  
 Come and sit by Jesus  
 and be served  
 as you feel able.

## **Reflection & Bible reading.** John 13:1-17, 31b-35

*If you are able, watch the video reflection by Jock Dunbar at [www.ssuc.org.au/devotionals](http://www.ssuc.org.au/devotionals), otherwise please read on for the full text.*

Watch & Listen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xMflp-irg>

Turn on the radio, watch a movie or TV show: soon enough the subject of love will emerge. Someone's fallen in love; someone else wants to be loved; someone's been hurt by the person they love.

It's a very human thing to love. It's a basic need. I'm reminded of the work of Brene Brown, who has studied extensively in the area of shame (I know – sounds like a fun topic, doesn't it?). She's learnt that all people want to know they are worthy of love and belonging. That's something I can identify with. I've provided a link below where you can watch her TED talk online.



Watch & Listen: [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability)

Love is core to who we are and what we need. But there's one thing that puzzled me about this passage this week.

I remember that Jesus and his disciples were faithful Jews. It is part of their identity as Jews to love. In Deuteronomy 6:5, Moses says quite famously to the gathered nation of Israel as they're about to cross the Jordan River, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might." Then in Leviticus 19:18, Moses teaches, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Love is not only a core part of every human being, but it is also a core part of the Jewish faith.

How then is this new commandment, new?

Scholars tell us that it is through the redefinition Jesus makes of how to love one another: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another," (Jn 13:34). We love one another as Jesus has loved us.

In this time of pandemic, social or physical distancing, and self-isolation, the question of how we love one another and our neighbour raises its hand inviting an answer.

Observing the new restrictions of how we interact with other people can be a form of loving one another, because our care and concern can be for other people as well as for ourselves. Through my reduced involvement in public and through self-isolation with my family, I can make a positive contribution toward not potentially spreading the COVID-19 infection to other people if I become infected.

But how does Jesus love us? Well, that's given in the beginning of the chapter. Jesus washes the disciples' feet. It's an ancient practice of service done by the household servants, and certainly not by someone of Jesus' status, which was a Master and Teacher with his disciples/apprentices.

Something that occurred to me as I was reflecting on this was to not limit Jesus' act of love for us to him washing the disciples feet and his death on the cross. Rather, to use these critical and central moments as a way to interpret his whole life as an act of love for his disciples to then model and imitate with others. Sounds obvious, but it's not something I've deliberately or intentionally done in my reading – to look for love in all Jesus does.

I feel the invitation to read the gospels and interpret all of Jesus' words, teaching, actions as acts of love. Some of that rereading will be easy to discern Jesus' love, but others may not. I'm presuming there's going to be some struggling and wrestling with the Scriptures in taking up that invitation. Perhaps it's something you might like to do too. I'd be interested to hear from you if that's something you end up doing.

As we learn to love one another, and our neighbour as ourselves, let's never forget that the source of that love is something first given to us without our having to ask – Jesus, through the Spirit, loves us unconditionally, loves all people just as a loving parent does for his/her children, grandparent for their grandchildren, or person for their pet. We all belong to God, are precious and unique to God in this world. I am precious to God, and so are you.

May the love of Christ be real to you now.

## **We continue our Holy Week journey to the cross**

*Use the following prayer as something to continue to meditate and/or journal about, using each stanza as a prompt. E.g. How is 'love one another' simple? Costly? An example? An ambition? :*

Love one another;  
a simple command.  
Love one another;  
a costly demand.  
Love one another;  
an example by which to live.

Love one another;  
an ambition into which to grow.  
So take the affirmation  
offered and received  
and grow in love  
for one another,  
loving as Christ loves you.