

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Fifth Sunday of Easter: May 18, 2025

Modern Model of the Commandment to Love One Another

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on the Fifth Sunday of Easter. Our Gospel today represents what is often referred to as the "farewell discourse." This means Jesus is preparing his followers to be ready for his departure, which will be his death. One of the stunning parts of this text is the location. This passage comes on the heels of Judas leaving the other disciples at the last supper to betray Jesus.

It is an amazing moment. We know what is coming and we know where Judas is off to. We wonder what Jesus will say or do next. His response is to talk about the glorification that is to come. This glorification will be realized in his death on the cross and his resurrection. Through these events God will be glorified in Christ. And in this moment, Jesus wants to prepare his disciples for that reality and to command them to love one another.

Loving those with whom we agree or are in partial agreement with is the easy part. Loving the rest of the folks we come in contact with is a much more difficult proposition. It is a part of the human condition to love and to want to be loved. Reality is ... it's easier to love those who are more loving and lovable. It is said that John, in his old age, would remind those around him to love one another. When questioned why he told them this he stated "Because it is what our Lord commanded. If it is all you do, then it is enough."

Just this week I watched the end of the basketball season, feeling a little let down. I so much wanted the Warriors to win. Very disappointed, I was listening to the interviews after their last game and noticed that those defeated Warriors took their loss in stride. Although saddened by their loss, they were able to hold hope about the future and I didn't hear a lot of naming and blaming.

Anyone who is a fan of the Warriors knows the name of Steph Curry. Some feel, myself included, that since his injury kept him out of the playoffs, it seriously affected the outcome of the game. So, after listening to Steph talk about the situation in a very compassionate and understanding way, lifting up his colleagues (even through the big loss) he held hope, did not blame and generally it was a joy to listen to his critiques and suggestions from the past season to envision a hopeful next one.

When I turned the TV off, I googled "is Steph Curry a Christian?" He certainly acts like one. Is it possible he is following Jesus' commandment to love one another, sharing this love with his teammates which was then reflected in the grace they displayed in their loss? This is something hard to do in such a public forum! Last week we heard about Frances Perkins, a modern disciple and saint and now Steph Curry, a person living in our present time; who is local, and that best represents today's Gospel.

It is known that Curry frequently speaks about his faith in interviews and public appearances. Talking openly about how his faith is his "driving force". In fact, he has "I can do all things" written on his shoes, which is a reference to the Bible verse Philippians 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me").

He views his basketball talent as a gift from God, and his platform is a gift he uses to share his beliefs. If in a deep discussion with him and when appropriate, it has been noted he has a desire to "point people towards the Man who died for our sins on the cross."

Curry has a strong Christian foundation instilled by his parents. This included church and Bible studies. He and his wife, Ayesha Curry, also prioritize faith in their family life. In his own words. "My mom started a Christian Montessori school when I was in first grade, so we all went there together. Mom was in charge as the head mistress, our aunt was our teacher, and our grandmother was the cook. My brother and sister and I were blessed to have such great influences in our lives, and I can honestly say that my mom and dad were the best. They raised us to believe in God, and we were at church every Wednesday for youth Bible studies and every Sunday for services."

But most notably, and more importantly, Steph Curry lives out his faith in action within community. He is involved in various charitable activities, including his foundation: "Eat. Learn. Play." which aims to fight childhood hunger and provide safe spaces for children to play. His platform is seen as a way to "let his light shine" and positively impact others.

Curry states, "There's more to me than just this jersey I wear, and that's Christ living inside of me."

This act, to love others, is a distinguishing mark of the followers of Christ during scriptural times and continues to be our call today. Some would say that one of the weaknesses of the church today is the way too many Christians do not embody this commandment — or the others — like Jesus commanding his followers to love their neighbor.

An interesting thing to note in this text is that Jesus is reminding the disciples that they will be known to others by their acts of loving. We would do well to listen to this commandment. We also are called to love others as a mark of our own discipleship.

Jesus makes plain his call to the disciples. "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples — when they see the love you have for each other."

The way Jesus talks about loving each other is a precursor to the spread of Christianity. As he loved and that love spread within his inner circle, so too will love continue to spread after he is gone when love is done in his name. Let's seek to recognize those around us that are actually living out the Gospel to strengthen our own faith and call us into action.

Jesus was bold and clear then. I presented to you this morning how Steph Curry is living out this commandment. Living proof that even in today's world, even in a high stakes position, it is possible to live out this commandment. How much clearer do we need Jesus to be for our own lives of discipleship now?

We are called not to just love those who look like us, think like us, or agree with us. We are called to love as Christ loved. Jesus died on the cross for not just a few, but for all to

experience God's love through his sacrifice. Those living in Jesus' time were just like us, focused on the survival of living. However, it is the love and the giving that makes us different. Amen