

Marquand Chapel
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They'll Know We are Christians By Our Love

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The Marquand Gospel Choir

1 John 2:1-11

Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light of Christ. This is our goal as Christians, and this message is at the heart of the First Letter of John. It is not enough to talk the talk and give lip service to following Jesus. We've got to walk the walk. We've got to be authentic. And this is especially important for us. As leaders, and future leaders of the Church, we are challenged by this message for ourselves, and also for the people we will serve.

We build up the community of Christ when we follow Jesus in word and deed. In our churches we are called to love and serve all the people, and you know as well as I that some are easy to love, and some aren't. **And this is what the author of 1 John** is getting at. It's easy to love those who love you, right? It is hard to love the others. This is something that has to be learned, and we are part of a long chain of teaching and learning that goes back centuries.

Jesus called the apostles and taught them – through word and deed – then sent them out. The apostles called others and taught them – through word and deed – then sent them out. And this heritage of leadership has been handed down through the generations to you and me – and some of us are getting ready to be sent out. **We learn** to walk the walk of Jesus when we see it modeled for us. We learn to walk the walk of Jesus when we do it in community.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

They'll know we are Christians by our love, because love transforms and sanctifies. Love makes us a holy people, not a perfect people, but a holy people. **Our identity as Christians** is marked by loving words and loving actions. And we learn to live this way by watching others. It is an apprentice system in its purest form. The more we see it, the more we practice it, the easier it will be to invite others to do it too.

When my family and I stayed with the Iona Community for a week this past summer, we learned that loving communities are built upon deep relationships. **To truly become** a part of the Iona Community, and be changed by that community, we needed to invest ourselves in getting to know people on a deep level. **Part of the way** we did that was modeled on the way the monasteries of old have done it. We worked together. We performed the mundane tasks of the daily life together. We helped prepare and serve meals; we cleaned the buildings, and in the

process we got beneath the surface identity we show each other, and began to dig deeper. I'm telling you... you learn a lot about someone when you are cleaning bathrooms together. **Deep relationships make for deep communities.**

The big surprise for me at Iona was that I found I was happy to be serving others, but I felt uncomfortable allowing others to serve me. Perhaps it was pride; perhaps it was the desire to be self sufficient. However you label it, I think it is a trap. It is a trap that a lot of us can fall into. **Communities built in love** require both the willingness to serve and the willingness to be served. There is reciprocity. Now... we probably wouldn't be here at YDS if we didn't have some desire to serve, but remember the story of Jesus washing his apostles' feet. **If we want to walk as Jesus walked**, we need to learn to rely on others. We need our study groups, we need our prayer groups, and we need our church communities. We can't be solo practitioners and walk as Jesus did. **If we do, we run** the risk of being reduced to just another part of the service economy. God's economy is different and it's an economy built on love.

We will work with each other; we will work side by side.
We will work with each other; we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each ones dignity, and save each ones pride.
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

At the heart of our community, and the Iona Community, and countless other communities is prayer and worship. Doing this together is the most obvious way we can demonstrate our commitment to follow Christ. **I know that in some ways** I'm preaching to the choir... but the way we choose to worship together can greatly influence the way we create community. **Worship in its best form** can be the place where our individual journeys of faith intersect. And worship that values and embraces the diverse talents of a community will build that community up. **Inviting everyone to actively** participate in worship will help create those deep relationships that are so important for a community. **If we exclude or devalue** the gifts of some, even unintentionally, we miss a great opportunity to serve and be served by others. **That also means** that if we see that worship practices have become barriers instead of builders of community, we should take action.

My challenge to you, my beloved brothers and sisters, is to walk in the light. **Keep your eyes** open for the dark patches in the road: pride, self-sufficiency, arrogance, and independence. **And choose instead the light**: community, reciprocity, and interdependence. Choose to love because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

We are one in the Spirit; we are one in our God.
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in our God.
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.
And they'll know...

All praise the Creator from whom all things come.
And all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son.
And all praise to the Spirit who makes us one.