

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

—John 13:34



MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 13

The Gospel of John uses two Greek verbs for love interchangeably: *agape* for self-giving love and *phelos* for the love of a friend. It's as if the author of the Gospel of John can't tell the difference between a regular friend and the kind that you would die for. Upping the stakes, the gospel writer has Jesus commanding us to live in this relationship. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you." If it weren't a commandment, I might shrink away from it. I can only take up this great task if some greater power requires it. Living in love is not just about the pleasure of another's company – it is also about the cracking open of my heart. It isn't just about the feeling of love – it's about the decision to love.

Significantly, the Gospel of John never commands people to love God. The love that you might think is the first and greatest commandment isn't found in John's Gospel. Instead, we are commanded to love each other. It is in this love that we find God's love. Love binds God in the dance we call Trinity. Love is the power of God to hold all things together in singularity and to open our hearts so that there is more room for the Trinity to dwell and dance in our lives. When we dare to have our hearts opened, God is able to draw closer to us. When we risk losing our autonomy in relationship, God is right next to us, making us into love.

—Paul D. Fromberg