

“The Cosmic Soul: Citizens of the Cosmos”  
John 13:34-35

How do you know someone is from Western New York? There are cultural markers that bond us together instantly: our shared resilience in a lake-effect blizzard, our undying (and often heartbreaking) devotion to the Bills, or the way we know exactly where to find the best wings. These markers tell the world where we belong on a map.

But what happens when the map gets bigger? What are the markers of a citizen of the United States? Or a citizen of the North?

Today, I want to invite us to zoom out even further. Beyond our zip codes and our national borders, what does it mean to be a **citizen of the Cosmos**? What are the markers of someone who lives out of a deep connection to the entire realm of God?

Jesus gives us the answer with startling clarity and simplicity in John 13: **“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.”**

Unconditional love is the distinctive passport of a citizen of the cosmos.

To understand how radical this is, we have to look at the setting. This wasn't a graduation speech given in a moment of triumph; this was a farewell speech given in the shadow of betrayal.

The text tells us Jesus was "troubled in spirit." He had just washed the disciples' feet - including the feet of Judas. He knew Judas was about to sell him out. He was in profound emotional pain. If Jesus had let fear or anger rule the room, he could have exposed Judas, shamed him, or rallied the other ten against him.

Instead, Jesus does the "cosmic" thing. First, he protects Judas's dignity by giving him bread, so the others wouldn't suspect the betrayal yet. Second, he shifts the focus to a love that transcends the immediate hurt. He chose to focus on the only force that actually matters in the long run. He moved from his personal "troubled spirit" to his "Cosmic Soul."

In the 2014 film *Interstellar*, a group of astronauts travels through a wormhole to the far reaches of the universe to save humanity. In one pivotal scene, Dr. Amelia Brand is trying to convince the crew to follow a path led by her heart rather than just the cold data on their screens. She says something that sounds remarkably like a commentary on our scripture today: <https://youtu.be/L2Brm4g4HPU>

*"Love isn't something we invented. It's observable, powerful. It has to mean something... Love is the one thing we're capable of perceiving that transcends dimensions of time and space. Maybe we should trust that, even if we don't understand it yet."*

As citizens of the universe, this is our calling. We are invited to "trust that," even when it doesn't make logical sense. We are called to zoom out of our personal preferences, our fears, and our local "maps" to focus on the force that transcends every dimension: Love.

If we look at the universe through the eyes of science, we see this same "force" at work. In his book *Thank God for Evolution*, Michael Dowd notes that no matter what happens in the cosmos, the story always moves toward **greater intimacy**. Think of the sun. In her book *Radical Amazement*, Judy Cannato describes the sun as a "loving parent." Every single second, the sun converts four million tons of its own mass into energy in the form of light. It literally gives itself away so that we can flourish.

This is the "Cosmic Pattern."

- The Sun gives itself away so the Earth can live (Photosynthesis).
- God gives God's-self away in the person of Jesus so we can truly live (Incarnation).
- We are called to give ourselves away for one another (Discipleship).

Jesus taught us that divine energy is inclusive. It radiates toward everyone - the faithful, the seeker, and even the betrayer. When we incorporate this "Light" into our being, we begin to radiate compassion, wisdom, and grace. We stop being just "Western New Yorkers" or "Americans" and start being "Compassion-Bearers."

This cosmic love is not weak. It is the strongest thing in existence, but it must be learned and relearned. We often live under the illusion that we are separate from one another, fueled by fear. But the universe proves that every breakthrough - every creative leap in history - was preceded by a "breakdown" or a difficulty.

The power of love grows precisely when we face the challenges of our lives - the "Judas moments," the "whirlwinds," and the "crosses"—with the spirit of God's connection.

So, how do we know if we are successfully living as citizens of the cosmos?

There is an old story of a Rabbi who asked his students, **"How can a person tell when the darkness ends and the day begins?"**

One student said, "Is it when there is enough light to tell a sheep from a goat in the distance?" "No," the Rabbi said. Another said, "Is it when you can tell a fig tree from an oak tree?" "No," the Rabbi replied.

The students were confused. "Then when is it?"

The old Rabbi gently said, **"It is when you can look into the face of any human being and recognize them as your brother or your sister. For if you cannot recognize the face of your kin in the face of a stranger, the darkness has not yet begun to lift, and the light has not yet come."**

May we live as children of the Light, citizens of the stars, and followers of the Love that will not let us go.

**Amen.**