

## Love Just As I Love

John 13:21-38

**Call:** Ps 63:1-3 (NIV)

**Scripture:** 1 Cor 13:4-8a (NIV)

### I. Intro

Happy Mother's Day! As we enter back into the Gospel of John today, our topic will indeed be love, a very special kind of love, a "just as Jesus" kind of love, which seems quite appropriate today.

### Review

We are in John 13. Jesus has gathered his disciples in an upper room in downtown Jerusalem to give them one final teaching. And, how does he begin this final teaching? By washing his disciple's feet. Quite an astonishing act. As we talked about two weeks ago, in this act, Jesus defines Lordship. Lordship means service. And, in the corresponding words, Jesus defines discipleship. As Jesus has served them, so they now are to serve one another. As we said, "Our neighbor is the appointed agent authorized to receive what we owe Jesus" (Newbigin, 168). We owe Jesus a massive debt, and we repay that debt by serving our neighbor. This, as we said, is to be people of the towel.

In today's text, Jesus will explain this mission even more, but he will now express it in the language of love. He will give us a new commandment today, and, what is astonishing this time is that it happens in the context of heart-wrenching rejection. So, I invite you into our text, beginning in John 13, verse 21.

### II. The Rejection of Judas (21-30)

*21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." 22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. 23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, 24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. 25 So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. 27 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." 28 Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29 Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. 30 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. (ESV)*

#### A. Troubled

Of course, Da Vinci's famous painting is one rendering of this scene.

Jesus begins this scene by being troubled. Why is he troubled? Because he knows that one of his closest friends will betray him. So, for the third time in this chapter alone, the subject of Judas' rejection arises.

### **B. The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved**

We are also introduced here to the disciple whom Jesus loved, sitting next to Jesus. The traditional view is that John, the writer of this Gospel, is, in fact, the disciple whom Jesus loved. But, there is much debate about who this disciple is, which means many books have been written about it. But, maybe that's not the point. Jesus loves his own and will love them to the end. John has already told us that in verse 1 of this chapter. Jesus is the great lover! Therefore, we all can say that we are the disciples whom Jesus loves. So, maybe it's not as important to name who the disciple is as much as it is to identify with him as being in an intimate relationship with Jesus.

### **C. The Conversation**

Now because the disciple whom Jesus loved is in a seat of honor, he can easily speak to Jesus privately. And, so it seems Peter, who is farther away, gets this disciple to ask Jesus who the betrayer is. Jesus then takes some bread and serves it to Judas Iscariot. Since we know the end of the story, it seems obvious what is happening. However, on that night, no one besides Jesus knows what is happening. Ignorance and confusion reign on this night for the disciples, which is probably a good thing because Peter probably would have killed Judas if he had actually understood what was going on!

### **D. Love's Last Appeal For Judas**

It's generally assumed that Judas has also been placed in a seat of honor next to Jesus, on the other side from the disciple whom Jesus loved. If this is the case, then Jesus can easily serve Judas the bread.

Regardless of how this happens, Jesus serving bread to Judas can be seen as another instance of his extraordinary love, this time to the most despised character of the story. Jesus serves Judas bread, an act of love and friendship. This is love's last appeal for Judas.

Judas, in turn, receives the bread, and Jesus' command to go quickly. So he does. He leaves quickly. Notice that Judas, even under the control of Satan, does what Jesus says. Who's truly in charge of this situation? Jesus is.

Now, if you know anything about meals in the ancient world, you'll know that this is about the worst thing you could do. When you share a meal with someone in the ancient world, it means you are friends. It means intimate relationship. So, a betrayal of someone after a shared meal is about the most despicable act anyone could do.

And Judas leaves.

### **E. The Judas View**

Now, let's reflect for a moment about what has happened so far. Remember in our foot-washing study from two weeks ago, we made the observation that as the disciples enter that room that night, they were discussing who would be the greatest in Jesus' coming kingdom. They enter that room with imaginations alive with dreams of palaces and crowns and thrones. They entered that room that night, the night before the cross, expecting Jesus to give them the battle plan setting up a political kingdom and destroying the Romans.

Then, Jesus grabs a towel and basin and washes their feet – *all* the disciple's feet, which means he washes Judas' feet. Jesus washes his enemy's feet. Would you have? I think I would have skipped him. Jesus doesn't skip him. He washes Judas' feet. As we said then, Jesus turns everything upside-down and inside-out in the foot-washing moment. His kingdom will not come by destroying the Romans. It will not come with a sword. His kingdom will come by serving the Romans, the enemies. His kingdom will come with a towel and basin.

And, I can imagine Judas looking at the towel and basin and saying in his mind, "You have to be kidding me. This is the way to destroy the Romans? With a towel and a basin. Are you kidding me Jesus? This is *not* what I signed up for! I signed up for destroying the Romans! I signed up to carry a sword! I will not serve the Romans! I hate them! You're crazy Jesus! I'm out of here!"

#### **F. And It Was Night**

And, unable to come to terms with this upside-down, inside-out kingdom, he leaves *"and it was night."* Judas chooses the night over the day. Satan had found a willing partner in Judas, and Judas walks away from the light of the world.

#### **G. Rejection**

Jesus is rejected by Judas. Judas is the first of all of Jesus' closest friends rejecting him when he needs them most. And, we get another rejection prediction in only a few verses. We're going to skip to verses 36-38 and come back to verses 31-35 afterward.

### **III. The Rejection of Peter Predicted (36-38)**

*36 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." 37 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times." (ESV)*

#### **A. Peter's Rejection is Coming**

Prideful Peter. Peter questions Jesus and Jesus' plan, and makes an impulsive promise. Perhaps he's still thinking he will be the greatest, and he'll show it by laying his life down for his Lord? But, Jesus tells him plainly. Peter, you will reject me. You will deny me three times before the rooster crows even tonight! And, of course, this prediction comes true.

#### **B. The Rejection Theme**

Jesus was rejected. The Lord of Glory was rejected by his closest friends. Have you ever felt the pain of rejection? I think we all have at some point in our lives. Jobs, teams, relationships – I think we’ve all been there. Perhaps you’re in the midst of that kind of pain right now, perhaps even as a mother? Jesus felt that pain of rejection that night, the night before the cross. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, was abandoned by all. He certainly was *“a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, despised and rejected by mankind”* (Isa 53:3).

I think this text can be a good reminder for us that we can stand nearest the Lord, not when we are triumphant, but when we are on our knees in pain, because we know he’s been there too. He’s been there! He knows what it’s like. Psalms says the Lord draws near to the broken-hearted, and that he gathers all of our tears in a bottle (Ps 34:18; 56:8). As we saw at the grave of Lazarus in chapter 11, Jesus weeps with us when we weep. He will eventually make everything right. He will eventually wipe every tear from every eye (Rev 21:4). But as Darrell Johnson says, “as long as there are tears, Jesus, the foot-washing Lord, will cry them with you.”

And, what is astonishing, is that in the midst of all of this rejection, Jesus turns our attention to love, verse 31, which begins the centerpiece of this text.

#### **IV. The “Just As” Love (31-35)**

*31 When he [Judas] had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (ESV)*

##### **A. Glory**

With Judas’ exit to do what he will do, the great moment of glorification can begin. As we have said all along, glory is a character word. And when will God’s character be revealed most splendidly? At the cross. The cross is the revelation of the depth of God’s love for us. *“For God so loved the world, he sent his son...”* The weekend that will change the world has begun, and the glory of God will shine forth most brilliantly in the cross. The horror and shame of that event reveal the extraordinary lengths God’s love will go for you and I and this world. The cross is the supreme example of genuine love.

##### **B. The Commandment**

And, it will form the basis of the new commandment. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

In some ways, this goes beyond anything God has ever said to his people before. Up to this point in history, the highest level of love has been, *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Lev 19:18, 19:34; Matt 5:43, 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27). In other words, you make sure you have

food, make sure your neighbor has food. You make sure you have shelter, make sure your neighbor has shelter. You make sure you have clothing, make sure your neighbor has clothing. And on and on it goes.

But, now, “*love one another just as I have loved you.*” We now have the standard and example before us. Jesus has lived his whole life giving his life away for us, culminating in the cross, so that we might live and enjoy the blessings of His kingdom forever. We’re to love one another *just as* he has loved us, by doing the same thing, by giving our lives away for others with the same kind of love. This is the new commandment, love *just as* Jesus loved.

### **C. Our Mark**

And, this is what marks us out as his followers. Love *just as* he loved is our defining mark. We give our lives away *just as* he gave his life away. Disciples of other lords or other gods are known by other things. Disciples of Jesus, the foot-washing Lord, are known by the way they love. If you belong to Jesus, this marks you. The mark of the old humanity is clamoring over one another for power and status, clamoring over one another to get to the top, clamoring over one another to be a great one. The mark of the new humanity, of followers of the foot-washing Lord, is laying aside grasping for more, clamoring instead to become first string foot washers. What marks us is seeking the good of others regardless of cost to self, *just as* Jesus did for us. This is how people know we are Christians. They won’t know us by our going to church or our reading our Bibles or the clothes we wear or even the words we say. They won’t know us by whether we wear masks or not or by who we follow on-line or by our politics. They’ll know us by how we love within our mask-wearing, within our social media presence and within our politics. We love *just as* he loves.

## **V. Implications**

### **A. Love of Enemies**

On one level, this is love for enemies. Jesus did wash Judas’ feet, didn’t he? Jesus gave his life away for Judas didn’t he. Jesus appealed in love to Judas over and over again, didn’t he? Love one another *just as* Jesus loves us includes our enemies.

In Matthew 5, Jesus says, [\*44 “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.\*](#)

We usually demonize, antagonize or simply skip over those who have betrayed us or rejected us or abandoned us. I know for me, a relationship goes bad in my life, and it’s so easy to turn to hate or to simply ignore the other person. But, what would it look like to love *just as* Jesus loves in those situations, to seek the good of the other regardless of cost to me? At the very least, I think it includes being respectful, being fair-minded and praying for them, maybe even offering bread to them.

### **B. Love of Church Family**

On another level though, this is also love to one another within the church – which may also include our enemy. In the upper room that night, Jesus is with his followers. And he says “one

another.” Love one another *just as* I love you. When visitors enter a church, they should respond with “See how they love each other! See how they’re ready even to die for one another” (Burge, 441). We are ready to die for one another, aren’t we? Nothing so draws a broken and fractured world than a community that displays radical and genuine love – a *just as* kind of love – among its members. Are we that kind of community?

## **VI. Conclusion**

Now this teaching is so important to Jesus, he repeats this command two more times in this section. So, we’ll get a chance to talk more about it at a later time.

At this point though, we’re going to transition to a sharing time. We’re going to have some sharing about a person who actually lives this new commandment as good as anyone I know. So, I’m going to call up Ann Henderson and Esther Paaske to share about this person...

Amen.

## **Benediction**

1 John 3:16, 18

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for one another... 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth, through the Spirit of the Living God.

## **Resources**

Bruner, Dale, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*

Burge, Gary, *John: The NIV Application Commentary*

Johnson, Darrell, *Preaching the Gospel According to John* (Regent College Course)

Newbigin, Lesslie, *The Light Has Come*