

Sunday, October 11, 2026
John 13:31-38

Message

Good morning and welcome to Kingsview this morning. And a wonderful happy Thanksgiving to all of you as well. We certainly have so much to be thankful for. And I for one find myself being incredibly grateful and thankful for you our church family. And as we step into the word of God this morning, I'm also incredibly grateful for his love and thankful for his grace upon our lives.

So, if you are new with us this morning, we've been walking through the book of John for the last little while. And over the past few weeks, we found ourselves sitting in the room, where the last supper is taking place. And it's been an incredible experience so far as we've seen Jesus take these final hours with His disciples and intentionally prepare them for everything that is about to happen.

We watched as Jesus got up from the table, wrapped a towel around His waist and began washing the feet of His disciples - taking on the role of the lowest servant in the room and showing them what humility and servant leadership actually looks like. And then last week, we watched Jesus reveal that one of the twelve would betray Him - the one whom He would give the bread to. And as Judas received the bread from Jesus, he got up from the table, turned His back on the Light of the world and fittingly walked out into the darkness of night. His mind made up.

And that's where we pick things up this morning. Judas is gone. The events that will eventually lead Jesus to the cross have now been set into motion. And with only His closest disciples remaining around the table, Jesus begins to prepare them for something they still don't fully understand.

If you have your Bibles with you this morning I'd like to invite you to turn with me to John 13 where we will be reading verses 31-38. If you are able to, I'd also like to invite you to stand for the reading of the Word of the Lord.

John 13:30-38
‘After receiving the piece of bread, he (Judas) immediately left. And it was night. 31 When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33 Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’
34 “I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
36 “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?”
Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.”
37 “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”
38 Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.’

For the sake of this message this morning, I’m going to be focussing on three elements that I see playing out here in our passage. And ultimately, I’m not going to reference Peter’s request not being answered the way he wants it to be answered about where Jesus is going. Jesus follows that train of thought in chapter 14, so we’ll get to that next time. But for today the three things that I want you to see here are as follows:

Jesus response to Judas accepting the bread and walking out into the night.
How Jesus references his disciples when he talks about himself being glorified.
And lastly, the new commandment he gives to love one another.

Now, if I do my job correctly, my hope and prayer is that at the end of the message you will be encouraged to continue your walk as a follower of Jesus Christ, not just a believer. My hope and prayer is also that you will see that believing in Jesus - true belief - always moves into some sort of decision based on love. The second thing I want you to see coming out is that how Jesus defines love is not necessarily how the world today defines love. Both are vastly different from each other.

So let’s hit the first part. At the end of last week’s message, we see Judas turn His back on Jesus - thus symbolizing his committal to the act of betrayal that he was about to embrace. We know that Jesus is not surprised by this. And we know again, from last week, that Jesus’ heart was already troubled going into this scene, and we know that his heart must have been even more deeply troubled to see Judas walk out the door. But I want you to notice that Jesus does not chase him down. Jesus turns around goes back into the room with the rest of the disciples and He now tells them that the

time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified - continuing to give vital instruction to the remaining disciples. He's hurt, rejected, about to be betrayed, but His focus remains unwavering. He doesn't allow the circumstances of that event to distract Him from His mission because He knows that ultimately this is all part of the plan to save humanity and for the glory of God to be revealed.

He then goes on to prophecy that He is going to go away for a little while, but that where He is going none of them can follow. Peter doesn't like this statement and in typical Peter-fashion, gets his back up a little bit and just like he did with the foot-washing ceremony begins to challenge Jesus. Peter is adamant that He must go with Jesus and that he would lay down his life for Him. Jesus at that moment gives Peter an incredibly humbling reality check by telling him that before the rooster crows to signify morning, over the course of that evening, Peter will actually deny and reject Jesus a total of three times.

Imagine if you're Peter in this moment. What's going through your mind? I imagine that Peter is shocked and perhaps even adamant, that he would not do this. He also must be thinking that Jesus doesn't lie, so maybe this is just a warning for Peter to not deny Him when the opportunity arises. But at the end of the day as we will soon see Peter does in fact deny Jesus three times. And even though this will be the case, Jesus is not deterred by this future reality and remains laser-focused on the task at hand.

Now notice how Jesus opens up his instructions to the disciples by not calling them friends or family or even men. He uses an entirely different approach by calling them little children.

This is fascinating to me. Because at first glance calling a bunch of grown, weathered men, 'little children,' sounds strange and perhaps even demeaning.

True story. Sometimes, not all the times, but sometimes Jordan and I will get into an argument, and one of us will push what we want a little bit harder and every once in a while, Jordan will look at me and say the words... 'You're no better than the kids. You're acting just like the kids. Sometimes I don't feel like I have three kids in the house. Sometimes I feel like I have four!'

But there's a difference between being childish and being childlike. And Jesus isn't insulting them here. In fact, there's a tenderness to this phrase. Jesus knows He's about to leave them, and it seems to me that He's speaking to them as a father speaking to his children.

And I think Jesus does this - in part - because He's speaking directly to a room full of grown men.

And as men, part of our tendency is to think that we have it all figured out. That we should lead and know exactly where we're going. No one needs to give us directions - we've got a plan and we're sticking to it. We can install the new washer, dryer and a dishwasher and save a couple hundred bucks - we don't need to hire that out to the professionals! Right!?!?

But little children don't normally act like that. Little children need to listen to the father. They need guidance. They need direction. They even need nurturing and attention and love. There's a level of dependence with children that says, 'I can't do all of this on my own. I need you.'

Which, as I was preparing this part of the message, immediately drew my mind all the way back that moment when people were bringing their children to Jesus but the disciples were sending them away. And Jesus says, 'No, let the little children come, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'

There's a bit of a double edged sword there isn't there? Jesus was showing the disciples in that moment that He loves all people and that He values kids and adults, regardless of what culture says - especially in the culture of the first-century world. But the secondary note is that there's something about the posture of a child relating to a parent that Jesus deeply values. There's something unique in the way children approach their parents. There's need. There's dependence. There's nurturing. There's a relationship that says, 'I can't do this on my own. I need help.'

It's a humbling perspective for some grown men to admit need - to confess that you do in fact need some help, isn't it? And if you're following the chain of thought here, this is exactly what Jesus had been teaching them through the last supper by washing their feet. Because if you are going to be great in the kingdom of God, you have to be willing to serve. And you have to be humble enough to recognize your need...that you need help and only Christ can offer it.

And so now, through this lens of the washing of the feet, the reference to them as little children, Jesus now gives them the instruction to love one another. And so, for leaders, such as the disciples, the humility and servanthood that is required for them to love the way that Jesus is instructing them to will not always be easy and will embrace elements of sacrifice along the way. And that when it gets tough, they can turn to their heavenly father and He will help them.

Interestingly this is the only time in the Gospel of John that this term 'little children' is used. In fact, outside of 1 John, this is the only time this phrase exists in the entire Bible. But in 1 John, (which is also written by John) it is used on numerous occasions.

And I think that what we're seeing here, is that John picks up on Jesus' phrase, understands the connotation behind it, and now applies it to us - now referring to us as little children. Reminding us that we too are like the disciples who don't have it all figured out, who need to cling to the Saviour, learn from Him, and humbly serve Him.

That when we approach God, our Father, it is not through arrogance or pride or anything that says, 'I know.' But everything that says, 'You know.'

So again - this entire discourse is to be understood from the perspective of a loving Father engaging with his children just before going on a long, long, long trip. And then sandwiched in the middle of this discourse is the instruction to:

John 13:34-35
'...Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

And if you remember, in the Bible, sandwiches are important. The two outer layers of this particular sandwich represent the interaction with Jesus and His disciples about his departure. But the middle now specifically highlights the call for them to love one another. The focus being that even though they are about to lose the physical presence of Jesus among them, the world can still see Him through His disciples - specifically through the way they love one another. And if they do it correctly - the way that Jesus instructs - then people will see Jesus in them.

Jesus prefaces this instruction by calling it a commandment. This is important. This is not a suggestion, recommendation or even a proposal. This is a commandment and needs to be treated as such. The heart of which suggests that this isn't optional. In fact, Jesus says that our love for one another should become one of the defining characteristics by which the world recognizes that we belong to Him.

Now, the strength of this commandment to love one another reminds me of Pauls words to the church in Corinth years later:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3
'If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith

so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.'

If I do not have love...I am but a clanging cymbal.
If I do not have love...I am nothing.
If I do not have love...I gain nothing.

This is serious. So what does Jesus mean when He instructs the disciples to love then?

Well, if you continue to read on in the corinthians passage, it becomes pretty clear - and we'll get to that in a moment, but first let's look at the word that Jesus uses with His disciples.

Love.

Seems simple enough to you and me, but we have to understand that there really isn't a singular word for Love in the Greek language like there is in the English.

I've said this before and I'll say it again. In our context, we use the word 'Love' without reservation and have no problem saying how much I LOVE a good burger and then in the next breath talk about how much I love my kids, Jordan...my Jeep...and even God. One simple word, but many different connotations. The same word I use to show my feelings towards a good burger is the same word I use for my wife....and God.

The Greek language on the other hand is the original language that the New Testament was recorded in and it is a much more descriptive language. The word Love in the Greek could have potentially up to 7 meanings, but 3 main ones that we see throughout Scripture. Eros is the sensual and sexual kind of love expressed between a husband and a wife. Phileo tends to focus more on friendship and affection and even carries the notion of delighting in someone. And then there is Agape which is the word that is used when Jesus commands His disciples to love one another. This kind of love is different from the others but Jesus doesn't go in depth with an interpretation here. He simply puts the focus back on Himself for a moment by saying:

John 13:34b
'...just as I have loved you.'

Which would have immediately taken them back to the moment Jesus got up from the table amidst

their conversation of who was the greatest, took hold of the wash basin and towel and without saying a word, started to wash their feet. An act that was reserved for the lowest of the servants was now being embraced by the King of Kings.

This is the kind of love that Jesus expected of them. The heart of which is humility and servitude through sacrifice. That no matter what they do moving forward, they are to humbly serve each other and the Kingdom of God - embracing sacrifice because this is the model that Jesus has given them. This kind of love is NOT feelings based - rather, it often requires choice. Because sacrificial love cannot be dependent upon feelings. Feelings change. Feelings come and go. And ultimately, there will be moments when our feelings fail us.

And we live in a culture that is so driven by feelings. You all know the famous mantra - 'If it feels good, do it.' If it feels right to you, then it must be right. Somehow in our culture feelings have now replaced the direction of the Lord and have somehow now been given the ability to dictate morality.

So when we now compare and contrast the love that Jesus is calling His disciples - and us - to demonstrate to a culture that is so often ruled by feelings, you can understand why culture and Christianity will inevitably butt heads.

Because a love that is built primarily on feelings ultimately has no foundation. As we just said, feelings change. Feelings come and go. What's here today might be gone tomorrow. But the love that Jesus demonstrates has substance to it. It has a strong foundation underneath it. It is based on the only One who is unchangeable, rooted in humility and sacrifice and it chooses to remain strong even when feelings fade.

Example: Relate to story of meeting Jordan and being completely and utterly in love and infatuated with her. I remember her mom telling her that at some point in our relationship we would likely hit a point where that 'feeling' would fade and that there may even be moments where you need to make an active choice to love your spouse. I didn't like that one bit - I was like, whatever, we've found true love and I'm sorry that you didn't....lol. But the reality is that true agape love will alway supersede feelings. Both Jordan and I have gone through seasons where we didn't always 'feel' it, but we did not allow our feelings to determine our love.

And that's what makes this command from Jesus so challenging. Because it's easy to love people when you feel like loving them. It's easy to serve someone when you feel appreciated. It's easy to sacrifice when the other person deserves the sacrifice.

But Jesus doesn't say, 'Love one another when you feel like it.' He says: 'Just as I have loved you… love one another.'

Just as He loved those who didn't always get it….those who always argued with Him….those who needed proof….those who annoyed Him incessantly, those would deny Him three times…and yes, even those who would end up betraying Him.

Love one another…just like that.

And when you do, it will show the world that you truly are my disciples - because this kind of love is what marks my followers.

And although Jesus doesn't spell out all the different characteristics of what this love looks like - and what it doesn't look like - as promised, we return now to the Apostle Paul's words to the church in Corinth, where he gives us one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of what this kind of love looks like in practice. I'm actually going to read it in the message version I love the way Eugene Peterson uses familiar language to make this extra clear and understandable.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (MSG)
'If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

2 If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

3-7 If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,

Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.
8-10 Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

11 When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

12 We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

13 But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.'

Let's pray.

BLESSING
May the Lord Bless you and Keep you
May He cause His face to Shine upon you
May He be gracious towards you
Lifting up His countenance before you
And may He give you peace
In Jesus name, Amen.

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