

## That You Love One Another

John 13:18-35

The 13th chapter of John surprises in the prominence of Judas in the chapter. Following the content of the chapter demonstrates this. His hour having come, Jesus loved His disciples to the end. The supper ended, the devil had put it in Judas heart to betray Him. Jesus, knowing all things, that He came from God and was going to God, took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples feet. He said to them, "You are now clean but not all of you." "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me. "What you do, do quickly." Then after he had gone out, Jesus gave the disciples the new commandment to love one another...

One reason Judas is such a presence is that Jesus needed to show that He knew what Judas was going to do before he did it. Jesus would show by means of the resurrection that He was the Son of God. God is never surprised. If Jesus was to die it must be ultimately because He chose to do so. There was human agency involved as this is God's way but the final cause of the crucifixion is that it was God's will that Jesus die on the cross for our sins. This reality is what it means to be God. It was necessary that Jesus reveal this to His disciples. They had not thought this deeply before the fact but they would need this in order to be a witness to the world of the truth of who Jesus was.

Judas is prominent here because His betrayal of Jesus was just that. Jesus' humanity is here on display. Nothing hurts more than betrayal. And the betrayal by Judas was an intricate part of the larger picture of Jesus' suffering. There was apparently nothing that indicated to the other disciples that anything was amiss in respect to Judas. Jesus did not fake a love for Judas. His love was real and genuine as He expressed it to each of the disciples. That he betrayed Jesus shocked everyone. So add this betrayal to the rest of Jesus' suffering. He was betrayed, beaten, whipped, mocked, with a crown of thorns driven through His

head, His was crucified, the nails driven through His feet and hands, where He on that cross bore our sin.

Judas also represents the threat to the church by the world and the devil. The devil had put it in the heart of Judas to betray Him. Judas had in some way given himself to the devil to do his bidding. Together they intended to destroy Jesus and they would have destroyed the remainder of the 12 as well. They failed. Unknowingly, they were a part of God's plan. God intended to save the world from their sins by means of the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. And this is what He did. But the devil's determination to destroy all that is of God has not diminished. He is still the primary enemy of the church. The church is constantly under assault. If we don't feel like we are under assault then this is just a failure of our senses. The devil intends to destroy everything that belongs to Jesus.

Think of the story of David when he saved the city of Keilah. Saul, who hated David and was intent upon killing him, heard that David was at Keilah. So Saul gathered his men in order to come against David at Keilah and kill him. David asked the Lord, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me up to the king?" And God answered, "Yes, they will." So David and his men fled from Keilah out into the wilderness. They were alone there. David and his men were alone in the world but they had each other. All they had was each other. The loyalty and commitment of David's band of men was legendary. They killed giants and slaughtered armies. They were fearless and heroic. They were called David's mighty men. They were also for years alone together having no one in the world except each other. You might say that you could tell the mighty men of David from all others by the love they had for each other.

So it was when Judas was fresh on everyone's mind that Jesus gave to His disciples the New Commandment. They were to love each other as Jesus had loved them. Their love would be the proof that they had genuinely been with Jesus.

Jesus set a standard for Christian love. This standard was His own love. Think of the character of Jesus' love. He loves with patience and kindness. He did not give up on the disciples when they were obtuse or when they just did as they pleased.

He was determined to keep them, to see them realize their potential, and to show them a path to wisdom and righteousness. The perspective of love is as powerful now as ever. Think of Peter's experience with his question about how often he should forgive his brother when he sins against him. His suggestion, as many as 7 times? Jesus' answer, No seventy times seven. Love believes and hopes and endures and bears all for the sake of the one who is loved and for the Christian, the central fact is not I love you but, Jesus loves you. The grateful recipients of the love of God through Christ honestly must respect His love for the world and for the church and love as Christ loved.

Actions motivated by love can take different shapes. One woman was married to a man who was troubled by many things. He suffered from physical pain. He lived in the shadow of family tragedies. He also suffered from mental illness. He was unable to hold a job and took out his frustrations with incivility in the home and disrespect of his wife. He was not always this way. They shared many good times as well but she understood him and she felt deep empathy for him in all of his troubles. She did all she could to make his life better. She tried in every circumstance to be a comfort to him. For years he self-medicated with alcohol which of course only made matters worse. He came though to the point where the alcohol was changing him and so enslaving him that it was going to kill him and so this woman, who had loved him and been such a comfort to him even bearing his abuse, gave her husband an ultimatum. She told him that she could no longer live with him as he was. She still loved him but he had to quit drinking and go through rehab and come back sober if he wanted to continue their marriage. Her actions changed but her love never changed. Whatever we do must be motivated by love. By this shall all men know that we are His disciples.

At any point in the above story, the wife's decisions could be questioned. Was she wise to live with her husband's issues for so long? Why didn't she give this ultimatum sooner? Why did she feel that now was the time when she had already borne so much, why not a little more? But love does not choose to judge. Love chooses to understand and to support and to encourage. God gives His grace.

Understand also the embattled position of the church. We have an enemy who seeks to destroy us. And to do so all he needs to do is to somehow get us to stop loving our Savior by failing to love each other. The answer is to come to grips with the situation. We are under assault and to survive we must love and support each other.

All of the social ills are answered by love. We live at a time when we are experts on every mental, emotional and social disability. The greatest growth industry in America is without a doubt, the mental health industry. I believe there is an answer and the answer is love. Love is simple. If I want to show someone that I love them, what should I do? There is always an answer to this question. We are speaking of course of just human love, one person demonstrating a concern, a care, for the well being of another. To act on the concept of love is healthy in so many ways. To love takes strength. It takes willingness to face rejection. It requires that one's self-interest be put aside. To love is to lead. To love is to care. To love is to risk. To love is renewing. To love is growing. Loving switches my focus from myself and to others. Loving helps others and feels good to me. Loving is rewarding. It can also be exhausting. You can love until there is nothing left but then, as soon as there is a need there is more within from which you can give. Love ultimately comes from God and so there is no running out.

"By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another"