

## John on Jesus - Love One Another

**June 2, 2013**

This morning, we are back in the Gospel of John. We are finishing the 13th chapter. Take out your Bibles to follow along. If you didn't bring a Bible, turn to page 900 in your pew Bible where you will find John 13. Take out your handout. I encourage you to take notes. While I teach so that everyone should be able to remember the main point of the message without taking notes, taking notes still helps. This week, I ran across a study that talked about how much more we learn when they engage our hands in the learning process, not just our ears. So I give you an outline with notes in the hope of learning more about Jesus. My challenge is we all take more notes to the glory of God to become more like him.

This section of John is called the Upper Room Discourse. This is Jesus' private teaching of his disciples before his crucifixion. In this teaching, Jesus is teaching his disciples, and us, what it means to be on mission to reach the world, to be missionaries. A missionary is not just somebody who lives on the other side of the world. Jesus calls every one of us to be a missionary right where we live. In these verses, we learn how to be a missionary in Spirit Lake, Spencer, Jackson, Lakefield, Estherville and Ocheyedan.

Last week, as we began chapter 13, Jesus and his disciples gathered for a meal. The disciples' egos were inflated after the Triumphal Entry. Crowds of thousands wanted their autographs because they were associated with Jesus. When everybody asks for your autograph, that swells your head. The disciples

had inflated egos when they came to the meal. Nobody wanted to humble themselves and do the dirty job of washing one another's feet and pick the crusty stuff out from between their friends' toes.

In an act of scandalous love that left everyone but Peter speechless, Jesus stripped down to his underwear, wrapped a towel around his waist, and washed their feet. This was unheard of. In the historical record, this is the only time we know of that a social leader stooped to clean the feet of a person of lesser social status. This left all of the disciples, except for Peter, speechless. They would never forget how Jesus humbled himself to serve them.

Most shocking was Jesus washed the feet of one person that was very dark. Jesus washed the feet of Judas, the one who was about to betray him. Jesus knew what was in Judas' heart. Jesus knew the darkness and wickedness in Judas' mind, yet Jesus washed the feet of his enemy.

Having set the scene, we pick up the story with our eyes on Judas, the betrayer.

I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." John 13:18–21 (ESV)

Nobody else knew Judas' heart but Jesus. Incidentally, this is a great reminder that Jesus knows our hearts right now. When we cuss somebody out in our mind or look at them and think they are a fool, Jesus knows. There is no hiding stuff from Jesus like we are skilled at hiding our thoughts from our friends.

In all practicality, when we choose to not confess our sin, the only one we are fooling is ourselves. Jesus already knows our hearts, just as he knew Judas’.

Then Jesus quoted a Psalm. It was Psalm 41:9. “He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.” *Lifted his heel* is a term used to describe what a horse does before it gives you a swift kick. This is why you don’t stand behind a horse. Psalm 41 was originally written by King David. In the Psalm, he described somebody who was a close counselor, a good friend, who turned traitor and tried to take him out. David wrote about the time his son, Absalom, rebelled against him, stole his kingdom and tried to assassinate David. When your son tries to kill you and take your job, that is a bad day. For David, it was a bad day that became worse. One of David’s closest friends betrayed him. His name was Ahithophel. He was David’s counselor and friend. He switched sides and tried to help Absalom kill David.

For David, this was utter heartbreak. Ahithophel was his friend, his helper; David played Nintendo with him when they were kids. As adults, they were on such good terms they could borrow garden tools from one another’s garage without asking permission. When they grew up, on Sunday night after church they used to go out for ice cream together. They were blood-brother close. In spite of their hearts being knit together, David’s best friend conspired to kill him. Ahithophel even recommended to Absalom that he sleep with his father’s wives in public to defile them and seal the rebellion against his father beyond the point of reconciliation. If I had a best friend that tried to kill me and then recommended

to one of my sons to sleep with Cindy in public, I think it would be a miracle of God I didn't send a scud missile through his forehead!

What an incredibly dark traitor! Even telling the story makes me want to put Ahithophel into a choke hold. Does anybody else feel that way?

Jesus quoted this Psalm as the disciples were sitting at the table eating. When he quoted this Psalm, these Jews knew their Old Testament. All of that anger and vicious hatred everyone had toward Ahithophel was immediately brought back to mind. People were feeling nauseous even thinking that a traitor like that is in that group of 12.

Then it said, after saying these things, Jesus was troubled in spirit. In English, we whizz past that. In the Greek, these words forced you to pause. The word *troubled* is used at least two other times to describe Jesus' feelings in Scripture. It is used to describe how Jesus felt when he stood in front of Lazarus' grave and was moved to tears as he wept for his friend. It is also used to describe how he felt when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion. In the garden, he was so troubled and under such stress that the capillaries in his skin began bursting. He sweat drops of blood. When it says Jesus was troubled at Judas' upcoming betrayal, we need to picture him sobbing, heartbroken and physically shaking over the pain of betrayal. That is what the text tells us.

I want to pause and just acknowledge that many of us have experienced an Ahithophel in our lives. Many of us have experienced betrayal by someone we love. Psychologists tell us betrayal by someone you trust is one of the most

devastating emotions we can experience. When a spouse has an affair, it takes years for the betrayed spouse to recover, if at all. When a spouse unexpectedly divorces a mate, that is one of the most devastating emotions a man or woman can experience. When a parent, who is supposed to love a child, abuses a child, that child will live with the scars of broken trust for the rest of his or her life. In the case of Judas, when a good friend switches sides and starts planning your death, that hurts. I want you to know, when we feel like saying, “Jesus, you have no idea how much betrayal hurts.” You need to know, Jesus understands your pain. He experienced devastating betrayal. When it says Jesus was troubled, he was physically trembling. He was shaking at the thought of somebody he dearly loved, that he did life with 24 hours a day for three years, betraying him. The thought of getting stabbed in the back by Judas, a close friend, was agonizing. Jesus understood how we feel.

The Bible tells us the disciples were shocked at this.

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. John 13:22 (ESV)

You get the picture that Jesus’ announcement took everyone by surprise. If you look at this scene in the other Gospels, the reaction of the disciples was one of shock and sorrow. One at a time they started asking Jesus, “Is it me?” In the Gospel of John, which was written by the apostle John, we get a slightly different picture from someone who had insider information.

One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at the table at Jesus’ side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” 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. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." John 13:23–27 (ESV)

Last week, I told you about the way this meal would be eaten. Unlike Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper, which has everyone eating at a picnic table, these meals were eaten in a reclined position, usually on low couches with a low table in the center. People leaned on their left elbows.

To me, this is the perfect guy-style meal. Guys always want to eat on the couch. That is biblical. Guys, when your wife tells you to stop eating on the couch, tell her you are just acting biblical in your eating habits.

The best part of eating in the reclined position is when you are full, you just roll on your back and go to sleep, which is a very guy thing to do after a football game and a plate of hot wings. This is exactly what we have here.

A little more historical background will help. The seating was typically arranged in the shape of a U. In this society, seating arrangement was very important. The head of the meal reclined at the center of the U. The second most honored guest reclined on his left, the third most honor guest on his right. The guests were then organized by a descending order back and forth down the long sides of the table. Personally, I am thankful that we just seat father's at the head of the table and all they have to do is cut the turkey and pray for the meal. It is much simpler. In this society, that wasn't the case.

As they get ready to eat, Peter, who was toward the bottom of the pecking order and seated on the opposite side of the table away from Jesus started playing charades with the apostle John and sending him hand signals.

In this Gospel, John didn't identify himself by name; it was a cultural thing not to identify yourself by name in your writings. John identified himself as "the disciple Jesus loves." That doesn't mean that Jesus didn't love the other disciples. He loved all of them. He even loved Judas, which is why Jesus was trembling at the thought of his betrayal. When we began this series, in the first message we learned a about John. He was the youngest of the disciples. He was everyone's kid brother. Everybody looked out for him like they were looking out for their little brother. Even Jesus loved him like a little brother.

In this scene, John was getting the hand signals from Peter to talk to Jesus and learn the identity of the snake in the grass who was planning on bumping off Jesus. I think Peter was planning to knife the guy on the spot. Think about this. Peter was a rough fisherman. He was impulsive. He was highly protective of Jesus. In the Garden of Gethsamene, he went for the high priest's servant's head but missed and chopped off his ear. Peter was planning on bumping off Jesus' future assassin.

John leaned back on Jesus and asked who it is. This means John was seated next to Jesus in the position of second highest honor. Jesus whispered into John's ear some insider information, "It is he to whom I give this piece of bread."

If Jesus was at the head of the table, there were only two people he can reach from the reclining position, the person on his immediate left and the person on his right. Everyone else was down table. The person on his right, the position of second highest honor, was John. That means the person Jesus gave the seat

of highest honor on his left was Judas. He was the only one Jesus could physically reach.

Even though Jesus knew Judas was about to betray him, he loved him and gave him the position of highest honor for the meal. In addition, in that culture, if you dipped bread and extended it to someone at the table, that was a way you pledged your love and friendship. Think of this as the ancient version of friendship bread.

If you received the bread extended to you by the host, that was the way you pledged your love and loyalty back. Jesus was loving Judas, his enemy, in every way he could right up to the last moment. Are you sensing the drama of this moment that the ancient audience felt when this was read to them? People were shocked by Christ's love and the depth of Judas' treachery. This is why, even after Judas left the meal, except for John, nobody in the group thought Judas was a traitor. They didn't think Judas was the assassin because he was in the position of highest honor and Jesus and Judas just did friendship bread together.

Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 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. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night. John 13:27–30 (ESV)

Verse 27 is troubling. It tells us that after taking the bread, Satan entered Judas. When I first read this, it set me back on my heels. It weirded me out. Judas ate demon bread and it was invasion of the body snatchers. Judas was possessed, walking around like a zombie muttering something about "Must kill



Jesus.” What happened? I will tell you I don’t understand all of this, but I do understand part of it. It is very important for us to understand what we can so we can discover the way Satan works against us before we become his next prey. There are three elements to this that are all true at the same time.

First, all this was ordained by God. It is clear that Judas’ betrayal of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament. The book of Zechariah predicted that Jesus would be sold out for 30 pieces of silver. In the Old Testament, Ahithophel’s betrayal of David was a type of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus that foreshadowed what would happen. They run parallel even to the point that after Ahithophel’s betrayal and Judas’s betrayal, they both hung themselves. In one sense, this was ordained by God.

Second, it is clear Judas became the special object of satanic attack. Satan saw Judas as a weak link in the disciples, so he began to work on him and, it appears, he even put thoughts in Judas’ mind. While God is sovereign over all things, in another sense, Satan was behind this focused spiritual attack against Judas.

Third, Judas made the choice to betray Jesus. He was fully responsible for his actions. This is something we need to unpack. Judas’ betrayal of Jesus didn’t come out of thin air. Apparently, it began with Judas betraying Jesus in little areas before he moved to this big sin. Judas didn’t confess his little betrayals, he hid them. In John 12, we learned Judas was in charge of the accounting. He got in the habit of skimming money off the top and not putting the full offering in the disciples’ piggy bank. It wasn’t long before he tried to justify

what he did by calling it a self-appointed processing fee because, after all, Jesus didn't pay him enough anyway. He hid his sin and greed. He didn't confess it when he sinned in the little areas. After all, he was just stealing petty cash. Unconfessed sin always grows. That is true with money; that is true with lusts, and that is true with attitudes. Sin is like mold. It thrives in the dark. The only way to kill it is by putting it in the light.

We first see this hidden sin in John 12 when we learn Judas was skimming money. We see it again in John 13 when the devil put the thought into his mind to betray Jesus. It was an especially alluring thought because he could betray Jesus for a little extra under-the-table money. What was his particular sin? Under-the-table cash.

When we sin, we may be successful at hiding it from our closest friends, but we are never successful at hiding it from Satan and his demons. Satan sees our sin, takes note of it, and begins leveraging it against us. I don't know exactly how this works. While I do not believe Satan and his demons can read our minds apparently Satan can put thoughts into our minds.

What can we learn from this?

### **1. Big public sin always starts as small unconfessed private sin.**

Nobody plans on an affair. Nobody plans on a divorce. Nobody plans on a fit of rage. They all start with small sins that we don't confess to others and repent of before God. How do we confess our sin and put an end to it? We need to confess our sins to three people.

First, we need to confess our sins to God.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

Second, we need to confess our sins to the one we sinned against. If you sin against your wife, you need to confess it to your wife. If you sin against a friend, we need to humble ourselves, confess it to a friend and ask their forgiveness.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV)

Third, sometimes we need to confess our sins to a brother in Christ for them to hold us accountable. Sometimes sins have a grip on our hearts. They are so deeply rooted, we can't handle them on our own. In those times, we need to find a Christian brother or sister we trust, confess our sins to them and ask them to hold us accountable, to meet with us once a week for coffee.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:16 (ESV)

Who do we confess our sins to? Get involved in a Life Group. Build friends at the Gathering Grounds Coffee Bar. Find trustworthy people and be honest with your struggles.

## **2. When we sin, Satan knows our weakness and will continue to attack it.**

Sin is never a one-time occurrence. Our own sinful lusts and the schemes of Satan and his demons will go after our weak areas in an opportune moment, usually when we are tired. How do we beat this? Community, confession, support and prayer. We live in a culture where everything is plastic and perfect.

Get over it. We are sinners. We are struggling. We can't make it apart from Jesus and each other. Stop trying to handle it on your own.

### A new commandment

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. 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.'" John 13:31–33 (ESV)

As soon as Judas left to betray Jesus, Jesus started talking about glory. Judas' betrayal would not lead to the end of Jesus, it would lead to the glory of Jesus. It would lead to God's glory. It would lead to God's glory through Jesus, and as a result, God the Father would further glorify the Son. The disciples didn't get it then, but they remembered it later. They understood it later. What looked like the bitter end was actually great glory for God.

Isn't this the way God likes to work not just in Christ but in us? He takes the things that break us and uses them to bring glory to his name.

"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." John 13:34–35 (ESV)

Now Jesus gave them, and us, his famous command. "Love one another, just as I have loved you." This can be a little tricky because loving each other is not a new command. It was around from the Old Testament in Leviticus 19. What makes this command new is the extent of the love and the power of the love.

We just saw the extent of this love. Jesus knew Judas would betray him. He washed his feet; he gave him the seat of honor; he broke friendship bread

with him. Jesus was not talking behind Judas' back. He was not popping off snide comments. He treated Judas with such respect and love that nobody in the room, except for John, knew who the traitor was, because Jesus loved him the same.

What is new about this command is Jesus was not just loving his friends, he was loving his enemies. What makes this love possible was not raw willpower but the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Bible says that when we ask Jesus to forgive our sins and be in charge of our lives, there is a supernatural change that takes place in us where we participate in the love relationship between the members of the Godhead. The love that exists between the members of the Godhead becomes what we experience. Our lives change. We start to love others like Jesus loves us. We even start to love the Judases in our lives. Nobody else in the world can understand it.

Let me give you some practical ways to apply this command to love one another.

- **Nexus** --- As most of you know, we have Nexus time to connect between services. It is a time to hang out and grab coffee. For some reason, we talk better with coffee in our hands. During the Nexus time, meet people. Take a genuine interest in them. Instead of using Nexus as an opportunity to talk about your life, use it as an opportunity to be genuinely interest in the lives of others.

- **Open your home** --- During the summer, Life Groups do not meet. I challenge each of us to invite two families over to your house for barbecue and burgers and just love on them.
- **Love those that are hard to love** --- For some of you, that is your neighbor with the barking dog. For others, that is the co-worker that gossips behind your back. For some of you, that is your extended family. Love the Judases in your life. Not in your own strength, but as you spend time with God in prayer and reading his word, he will change you.

## Conclusion

In this section of John, Jesus taught his disciples to be missionaries that would reach the world. He didn't tell them to reach the world by miracles. He didn't tell them to reach the world by charismatic gifts. He told them to love people, like Jesus loved them. If the church did that, people would know God lived among them.

Church tradition tells us that when the Apostle John was an old man in Ephesus and he was too old to stand, the members of the church would get him and carry him in his chair to the front of the church and ask him to preach. A great hush would fall over the room. Everyone would lean forward and John would say, "Little children, love one another." He would say it again and again. Sometimes younger members of the church would ask John to tell them something new. John refused. Why do you think he never changed his message? If God's people loved one another like Jesus loved them, the world would be drawn to the church like bugs to a light on a warm summer's night. We

will reach the world by loving others like Jesus loved us. As I close, I close with John's words as an old man. Little children, love one another.

## Prayer

Jesus, thank you for your scandalous love to your disciples. Thank you for washing their feet. We want to confess that we are often content to understand grace in our head, but not do the hard work of showing it in our lives. We understand humility as a word, but we don't like to humble ourselves. We don't like to wash feet, especially the feet of our enemies. We ask you to forgive us for that.

I ask your Holy Spirit to bring John 13 to our minds this week and use it to prompt us to serve others in little ways and big ways. Use your word to prompt us to even serve our enemies. Amen.



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