

John Chapter 13 v 34 - 35

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[0 : 00] to begin our service this evening with a word from Isaiah 42. Isaiah 42 verses 10, 11 and 12. It says this, sing to the Lord a new song and his praise from the ends of the earth. You who go down to the sea and all that is in it, you coastlands and you inhabitants of them, let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice. The villages that Kedar inhabits, let the inhabitants of Selah sing. Let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the Lord and declare his praise in the coastlands. Well we're certainly going to do that this evening. We're going to stand and we're going to give glory to the Lord as we sing our first hymn which I think is on the screen behind me so I need to get out of the way. Who has held the oceans in his hands? Let's stand and sing together.

Pray. Our gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come together around your word. We thank you for the fellowship that we share in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you that no matter where we come from, no matter what our background is, that we can come together in one accord, in one voice to sing the glory and the praises of our Heavenly Father. Gracious Lord, as we gather this evening, we ask Lord that you would be one of our number, that you would be present in our midst, that you would enable us by your Spirit to worship you in truth. Father, we ask that you would fill our minds with your words, that you would take away the dross of the world, the sin that so easily entangles us, that we would put that aside this evening and that we can come together and worship you. Father, you are due all of the honour and all of the glory and all of the praise, for you alone are holy.

You alone are Lord and God of all. Father, you are our Creator and our Saviour. You have given us all things, everything that we have, we have by your gracious hands. And Father, we worship and praise you, for you have given us all of the glory and all of the glory and all of the glory and all of the glory.

For you have created such a salvation. From before the world began, you set out your plan that your Son would live and die and rise again to take away the sin of the world.

Father, we come in faith, believing, believing that that sacrifice was for us. We come in the knowledge that it was sufficient, that it is sufficient for us. That no matter how bad we've been, no matter what sin we've become entangled with, that the sacrifice of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient to take away all sin.

[3 : 32] The trespass may be great, but the grace is greater still. Our Father, as we look to your Word this evening, we pray, Father, that you ask, Lord, that you would open it to us, that we might read it and hear it, that we might understand it.

Father, that by your Spirit, it might change us, transform us from glory to glory into the likeness of your Son. So, Father, help us apply your Word to our lives.

Father, may it make a difference to the way we act and the way we think, the way we behave, Lord. Father, sanctify us by your Word and by your Spirit, we pray.

Father, be present in your Spirit this evening. And do us good. In the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen. John's Gospel. The Gospel of John, chapter 13. And we're just going to read a few verses.

[4 : 50] We had a very long reading this morning from 1 Samuel 17. This evening I have a very short reading, just a few verses from the Gospel of John, chapter 13.

If you have a pew Bible, you'll find it at the bottom of page 1081. We're going to read from verse 31, right down there in the bottom corner, over to verse 35, just over the page.

So, John's Gospel, chapter 13, starting at verse 31. When he, that's Judas, had gone, Jesus said, Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little longer.

You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now, where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you.

[6:02] Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Amen. Well, if you'd like to turn back with me once again to John, chapter 13.

And we're going to look together at just a couple of verses. I've only read a few verses, but we're actually going to focus just on two verses from those few that I read.

Verse 34 and 35. A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. So no prizes for guessing what the subject of tonight's message is going to be.

[7:11] So, this passage, these few verses, the end of chapter 13, it's the opening of what's known as Jesus' farewell discourse, in which he discusses the nature of discipleship with his followers.

What it really means to follow Christ. And this follows over chapters 14, 15 and 16. If you've got a red letter Bible like mine, and you flick through those few chapters, you'll find there's very little black ink used in those pages.

They're all the words of Jesus Christ. So on the night of his betrayal, in the moments after Judas had been identified as his betrayer, one of his own followers identified as his betrayer, and just hours before he was going to be dragged in front of the authorities and hung on a cross, Jesus speaks these words to his closest disciples in the upper room.

And three times in those two verses, he commands his followers to do this, to love one another, to love one another, to love one another.

To quote John Lennon, love, love, love. Now this whole passage takes us right up to Jesus' arrest and trial, and all that goes on in chapters 18 and 19.

[8:46] So it takes up a good chunk of John's Gospel, four chapters in all. And the whole section, all of those chapters are rich in the language of love.

As Jesus explains to his followers what's being done for them, and in them, and through him, as well as what is expected of them.

I'll just give you a few examples from those chapters. Chapter 14, verse 15, Jesus said, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Chapter 14, verse 23, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him.

Verse 31, I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Chapter 15, verse 9, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. Chapter 15, verse 12, This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. 15, verse 17, These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

[10:10] And chapter 16, verse 27, The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from God.

So this evening, what I want to do, is just take three points, from this three times repeated command, to love one another. And the three points are this.

First of all, it's new. Secondly, it's a command. And thirdly, it's a response.

So it's new, it's a command, it's a response. We'll start off with the first one, it's new. Well, it is, and it isn't.

Because the Old Testament law, actually includes two specific, love commandments. And they're a little bit obscure, they're separated. One of them's in Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 5, where it says, Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.

[11:15] And Jesus picked up on this, and uses it, when he's talking to the Jews, and he points out, that this is, this is the heart, of the law. Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And then, later, in Leviticus, chapter 19, verse 18, the law says this, Do not seek revenge, or bear a grudge, against one of your people, but love your neighbour, as yourself.

Which is the second half, of what Jesus said, was the most important point, of the law. To love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour, as yourself.

He taught that, Jesus had taught that, that the law, and all the prophets, could be summed up, in these commands. So in what way, is Jesus' command, to love one another, new?

Well I think there are, two ways in particular. First of all, I think it's a new standard, is what Jesus is saying here. The relationship, between Christ, and the church, is portrayed, throughout scripture, as that between, a bridegroom, and a bride.

[12 : 28] And you find, this sort of language, throughout the Old, and New Testament, culminating in the, glorious celebration, of the marriage of the Lamb, in Revelation 19. I just want to read you, if I might, take a moment, to read a few verses, from Isaiah 61.

If I can find it, there we go, Isaiah 61, verse 10, through to, the beginning of, verse of chapter 62, 61, Isaiah 61, verse 10, excuse me, I'm reading this, in my New King James version, which might be, slightly different, to what you have there.

It says this, I will greatly rejoice, in the Lord, my soul, shall be joyful, in my God, for he has clothed me, with garments, of salvation, he has covered me, with his robe, of righteousness, as a bridegroom, decks himself, with ornaments, and a bride, adorns herself, with jewels, for as the earth, brings forth its bud, and the garden, causes the things, that are sown in it, to spring forth, so the Lord, will cause righteousness, and praise, to spring forth, before all the nations, for Zion's sake, I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest, until her righteousness, goes forth as brightness, and her salvation, as a lamp that burns, the Gentiles, shall see your righteousness, and all kings, your glory, you shall be called, by a new name, which the mouth, of the Lord, will name, you shall also, be a crown of glory, in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem, in the hand of your God, for you shall, no longer be termed, forsaken, nor shall your land, anymore be termed, desolate, but you shall be called,

Hephzibah, and your land, Beulah, for the Lord, delights, in you, and your land, shall be married, for as a young man, marries a virgin, so shall your sons, marry you, and as the bridegroom, rejoices over the bride, so shall your God, rejoice, over you, it's incredible, that the language, of love, that is scattered, throughout, God's word, just to pick up, on a few thoughts, from that passage, from Isaiah, God, rejoices, in his people, God rejoices, in his church, he is his crown, his most precious, treasure, he covers his people, with righteousness, transforms, his people, God found, a church, a people, sprawling in the dirt, that's where he found us, isn't it, he found us, sprawling in the dirt, and he transforms us, making us, into a crown, in his sights, this is the love, that God has, for us, and it's the same love, that he expects us, to have, for one another, it's a new standard, it's completely different, to anything, that's gone before, this isn't just a case, of making sure, your neighbours, got a cup of, a cup of sugar, when they need it, this isn't just about, being a good neighbour, this is about love, this is about, love, a real, deep, life changing, love, so it's a new standard, secondly, it's a new order, by this,

Jesus said, everyone will know, that you are my disciples, if you love one another, the church, is the greatest testimony, that God, is the one, who raises the dead, and helps the helpless, not only, is carrying out, his command, to love one another, the proper response, to God, who has chosen, and loved, and redeemed us, through, and for his son, but it proclaims, the best possible way, to a watching world, who God is, that is what we are called, to do, as the church, of Christ, this love, has evangelistic power, Jesus puts no limits, on who would recognise, this demonstration, it's for all, all will know, you are my people, he says, the best way, to show the love of Christ, to your non-Christian, friends and family, is to begin, by loving, one another, loving God's people, if we love Christ, then we want to obey, his commands, and he commands, that we love, one another, the law, was what set, the people of the old testament, apart, from the rest of the world, the people of Israel, it's what set them, apart, our love, first for Christ, and then our love, for our brothers and sisters, in Christ, ought to be what sets us apart, from the rest of this world, what does that look like, really, what does that look like, in practical terms, well to love Jesus, to love, like Jesus loved, is to love, inclusively, to love, indiscriminately, and to love, universally, the church, is to be, a community, across ages, across gender, across colour, across moral history, social status, influence, intelligence, religious, cultural backgrounds, nationality, wealth, the list goes on, that is what the church, is called to be, we all come from, different backgrounds, we all have different, pasts, we all have different, stories to tell, but we have one thing, in common, that we love, the Lord Jesus Christ, and because we love him, we love one another, because that was his command, that was his command, so it's a, it's a completely, new way, of looking at love, beyond, beyond, romance, beyond, friendship, we are called, to love one another, as Christ loved, us, now if anybody, knows

how to do that, if anybody, has a, has a little, idea, of how we can do that, then, grab hold of it, and do it, how can you, best love, the person sitting, next to you, in church, how can you love, that person, that drives you nuts, because that's what, you're called to do, you're called, to love one another, and it's a command, that's our second point, it's a command, it's not optional, to love one another, in the church of God, it is a command, our culture, has a problem with this, because our culture, in general, has this view of love, which is something, that is spontaneous, like a bolt, from the blue, or Cupid's arrow, that true love,

[19 : 55] Hollywood portrays love, in some awful ways, even some children's films, I've seen, portray love, in some terrible, awful ways, you know, a twinkle in the eye, at the first meeting, and we know, that the couple, are bound to get together, in the end, and they dance together, and the music changes, they gaze into, each other's eyes, and it's all beautiful, and lovely, and romantic, and it just happens, and you know, that it's love, and it's the feelings, that are emphasised, in our culture today, the feelings of love, the way we feel, the heart wants, what the heart wants, but then we see something, or we see someone, that we want more, and that's our new love, and the old one's forgotten about, friends, partners, wives, husbands, love, as something, that we fall in, and out of, as if we were just, changing our car, trading it in, for a newer, shinier model, how can that be commanded, how can love, be commanded, how can we be commanded, to love someone, what we want, what, what, and how we feel, is given priority, in our culture today, being true to yourself, finding your own path, it's the way we're, we're supposed to go, isn't it, it's the way we're told to go, but Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9, reminds us, that the heart is deceitful, above all things, and beyond cure, you see, to love someone, to really, really love them, from the depths of your being, from the heart, with all of your heart, with all of your soul, strength, and mind, it's not easy, it isn't easy, it takes a conscious effort, of the will, it's beyond emotion, emotions are part of it, but it goes far beyond, just those surface emotions, doesn't it, it takes an effort, it takes a will, what if we do something, that is unlovely, what if we stop being, lovable people, do we stop loving each other, when we stop becoming lovable, love isn't just, ethereal, intangible feelings, love for people, is born out of, our behaviour, around them, and the words we use, to describe them, and to speak to them, and the things that we do, with one another, and for one another, how could my wife, ever know, that I love her, unless,

I show her, through my words, and through my actions, how would, your brother or sister in Christ, know that you love them, unless you show them, through your words, and through your actions, how can the world outside, ever know, how much love you have, for one another, for your brothers, and sisters in Christ, unless you show it, through your words, and through your actions, actions, but that's hard, sometimes, sometimes, sometimes, it can be hard, to find a good word, to say about people, even people in the church, we can get on the wrong side, of people, people can upset us, and we don't want to talk to them, we can go years, without talking to people, because churches, are a mess, of people, from all kinds, of backgrounds, who, in the normal course of life, would never meet, and would never cross paths, and we are called, to love each other, we are not, not just called, we are commanded, to love each other, but this is the nature, of the way, Christ is building, his church, and it is, a building site, let's be honest, there's bits of scaffolding, up all over the place, and there's, there's some pretty dangerous, looking equipment, over there, and that's what the church, is like, it's a mess, it's a building site, because it's preparation, for what comes next, the church is diverse, and it's messy, and it's difficult, and sometimes, even dangerous, to us, but Jesus says, that it is our love, for one another, that should identify us, it should be, what the church, is known for, what defines, the church of God, the most clear, and obvious attribute, we should share, is our love, for one another, painful, difficult, and messy, as it might be, and yes, we don't live up, to the expectation, we don't, we never manage, quite to do it, but, but, but, one day, the church, will be made perfect, in Christ, and on that day, when it's completed, everything, will just fall, into place, and our love, for one another, will know no end, until that day, we have to work, at it, and that's why, it's a command, that's why, he commands us, to love one another, listen to this, from 1st Peter, chapter 4, verse 8, above all, said the apostle, above all, love each other, deeply, why, because love, covers over, a multitude, of sins, and don't we need that, don't we need that, from one another, love, covers, a multitude, of sins, we can't, we can't, make things new, we can't, make things better, but God can, and one day, he will, hallelujah, love, as a command, love, as, our identity, as God's people, a new standard, of love, a command, to love one another, as well, as both of these things, it's a response, isn't it?

The love that we have, for one another, is a response, Jesus tells his followers, to love one another, as he, has loved, them, however hard it is, for us to, to love, in word and deed, don't you think, it's harder, much harder, on a completely different, scale of hardness, for the perfectly, righteous God, to find something, to love about you.

Romans 3, verse 10, tells us that, there is no one righteous, no, not one, not even one, none of us is worthy, of God's love, and yet, how much did Christ, love the church?

[27 : 26] There was nothing, lovely, about me, and yet, he clothed me, in undeserved, robes of righteousness, and his glory, is revealed, in me, because of Christ.

Scripture calls us, a chosen bride, and his crown, you're a crown, did you know that? You are, a crown.

God doesn't just, tolerate us, he loves us, because of Christ. should I not, at least, try to reflect, the same level, of love, to my brothers, and sisters, in Christ, my brothers, and sisters, in the Lord, because of what Christ, has done.

There is no way, no way, on this earth, that I can make, an adequate response, to Christ's love, for me, by anything, I can do. There is nothing, I can do, for my brother, or sister, right to the point, of laying down, my life for them, that will be, an adequate response, to Christ's love, for me, because I could never, go as far, as he did.

Nevertheless, this is his command, that we love, one another, as he loves, us. The love, we have for one another, is nothing, but, nothing less, than, the, a direct, personal response, to the cross.

[29 : 04] We need to consider, daily, how, we're going to show, love, to our brothers, and sisters, in Christ. And it is born, out of that love, that God has shown us.

When he found us, down in the mud, down in the dirt, down in sin, and he lifted us up, transformed us, into a crown, of glory, for his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the level, of love. That is the standard, of love, that we are commanded, to respond with, because of what he has done, for us.

That we love, one another. It is glorious, it's, it's defining. It should be, what defines us, as a church. What we read, about the church, is it being pulled apart, pulled in different, directions, and disagreements, about this doctrine, and that doctrine.

And there are important, places to make stands. But there is a time, for love. And why, is the church, why, oh, why is the church, not known today, for the love, that we have, for one another.

[30 : 25] It's a great challenge, that he has set us. It's a great challenge, in those words, of Jesus. A new command, I give to you, love, one another, as I, have loved you.

So you must, love one another, and by this, everyone will know, that you are my disciples. If you love, one another.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[32 : 27] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Love one another as you have loved us. Father, may we be about this business.

May we be about loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. And may the love that we have for one another overflow into this world that so needs this love.

[33 : 33] This pure love. This love that weeps. This love that has paid the debts that we owe for sin. Father, we need your Holy Spirit.

In this, more than anything, Lord, we need your help, your guidance, your assistance. As we seek to love one another as Christ loved us.

As you love us. Father, a standard we can never hope to meet. But we can try. We can work towards it.

Always looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, Father, help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Help us to love one another.

In your Spirit. And in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.