

John 13 v 1

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[0 : 0 0] to turn in your Bibles to John and chapter 13, where we read just a few moments ago. That will be helpful as we consider just a small part of this passage this morning.

I'm just going to read the first verse again of John 13. It was just before the Passover feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. A long time ago, I went mountain climbing.

It wasn't really mountain climbing, I suppose, to be honest, because it was Mount Snowden, which is technically a mountain, and I didn't really climb it. I sort of ambled up it one afternoon and ambled back down.

But it was high and it was steep, and I got to the top. But real mountain climbing, if anybody has ever done it or seen it, is, of course, nothing like that. It's not an easy afternoon ramble up to the top of a hill or a mountain and back.

[1 : 1 1] It takes a lot of training and preparation. It takes a lot of gear and equipment. And particularly if you're climbing in the Himalayas or the Alps or one of those very high regions, it takes several days often to get to the top, particularly something like Everest, of course.

You can't just do it in an afternoon. Many months and many days of hard slug are needed to get towards the top of the mountain. The most important place on that expedition is the base camp.

That's the place where the climbers rest and the climatized get ready for the final push right up to the top. And when we come to John in chapter 13, really, this is like a base camp for us as we are on an expedition towards Easter, as we are climbing and ascending to the highest peak in the whole of the Bible, and particularly in John's Gospel, which is the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we're going to take a few moments here in John 13 to acclimatize, to set our minds upon, prepare ourselves for Easter. And we're going to do that over the next few weeks, God willing, each Sunday morning, looking through John's Gospel in these last several chapters as he prepares, or Jesus prepares the disciples for Easter, and as ultimately he prepares us for Easter, for the cross particularly.

Because the shadow of the cross is looming large now in John's Gospel. It's stretching back into these chapters. And so I want us just to look particularly at verse 1 of John 13.

[2 : 5 3] Jesus has finished his public ministry. He's done all the preaching he's going to do to the crowds. He's done all the miracles he's going to do to the sick. He's spoken with and debated with the religious leaders, and that's come to an end.

And now he focuses in these next four chapters particularly upon the 12 disciples and upon them, and in preparing them and preparing himself for the cross.

And John introduces this section helpfully with verse 1. He says it was just before the Passover feast. That's significant. It's meant to remind us that this is a significant event and was happening at a significant time.

The Passover was a special celebration that God had instituted on the night that he rescued the Hebrews from Egypt. All those thousands of years earlier, they had all had to gather together in their homes.

They had eaten a Passover lamb and put the blood upon the door lintels, and that was the Passover. And from that night, that very night, they were released from 400 years of slavery and captivity and began their journey on the way to freedom and ultimately to the promised land.

[4 : 0 6] And so God had commanded that once a year, a meal, a Passover meal, was to be eaten, similar to the one that took place those thousands of years ago, to remind them what God had done for them, to remind them of the greatest event in their history, the setting free of them from captivity and slavery.

And indeed, it was the most momentous event in the history of God's people up until now, because now a more momentous event was to take place. And so God had ordained it that the one should be combined with the other.

The Passover, remembering the Old Testament, momentous deliverance, and now what would be ultimately the Lord's Supper, the Last Supper, when Jesus would prepare to go to the cross, the greatest event of salvation and rescue in the whole of history, not just for the Israelites, but for the whole world as well.

And Jesus knew this, didn't he? It says there in the second part of the verse, Jesus knew that the time had come. Knew that the time had come.

He said that just a little earlier on. In chapter 12 and verse 27, when he was debating and talking, he said this, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

[5 : 2 3] And John often speaks about the hour. And Jesus saying, this is not my time yet. This is not the hour. But now is the time. Now is the hour. Everything has been going according to God's plan, going according to clockwork.

What God had done from the very big creation of the world and throughout the Old Testament was all leading up to this point in history. the Son of God giving himself to suffer and to die upon a Roman cross.

And all of Jesus' life from the moment he was born in this world was leading up to this point as well. All of his teaching and ministry and miracles, everything that he'd been saying, and he'd reminded his disciples on many occasions before now, I must go to Jerusalem.

I must suffer at the hands of the Gentiles. Everything was leading up to this climactic, crucial time, and it was now. Jesus knew it.

His going to the cross was not some accident. It wasn't that he was caught out by the Romans, or he was tripped up, or he was snared. No, it was all according to his will and purpose and plan, and the plan of the Father and of God the Holy Spirit as well.

[6 : 3 6] And so it was what time? Time for him to leave this world and go to the Father. And Jesus knew there was one final thing he must do before he can return to the Father.

He must go to the cross. He knew it. And there he is. He stood poised, if we can put it that way. This evening as he's gathered with his disciples, he's poised on the eve of the greatest battle of his life.

A great battle between all of sin and hell and all of Satan. He's going into a mortal combat with the powers of darkness this next day.

He's going to suffer in a way that is beyond the human suffering of any other person in the world. Not just his physical sufferings, intense and awful though they were, but others were crucified like that.

No, the sufferings of his own soul when he would be counted as a sinner by God, when he would feel and experience the full force of God's justice and judgment against your sin and mine.

[7 : 46] On the eve of the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon Bonaparte is supposed to have refused the affections of his wife by the famous words, not tonight, Josephine.

His thoughts were so taken up with the next day, so taken up with what held in store and the gravity of the situation that Napoleon had no time for his beloved. But how different Jesus is.

How different Jesus is. For we see here, don't we, that his concern is not primarily with himself, in spite of all that he knew he was going to experience and go through, but his concern is for his disciples, his dear beloved friends.

So much so does he love them that he chooses this moment to assure them of the deepest love that he has for them. Do you see that? Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

Isn't that incredible? Isn't that amazing? Just stop and think about that for a moment. In the light of what we've recognized, what we've understood to be the cross, and to be understood what he's going to go through.

[8 : 53] It would be the most natural thing in the world, wouldn't it, for Jesus to be preoccupied with himself in the night before his death. Be quite natural for him to say, look, I don't want to talk to you, I want to be alone, I've just got to get my mind together, my thoughts together for this.

We'd excuse him if like a man on death row, awaiting that termination of his life the next day, could have a final wish granted.

You know, the last meal for a condemned man, or that he could have some sort of pleasure or enjoyment centered upon himself. But no, none of these things are there. We find that Jesus, rather we're told, having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

And all that goes on from here now is about Christ's love for his disciples and his love being shown and revealed to them. He doesn't seek comfort for himself.

He doesn't say to them, look, can you sort of cheer me up a bit? I want some comforting words from you. I want you to show love to me. I want you to help me. I want you to be tender and affectionate towards me.

[10 : 00] No, rather he showers those things upon them because he knows their hearts. Beginning of chapter 14, he says to them, don't let your hearts be troubled. He knew what they were going through.

He knew the distress. He knew the sorrow. He knew the grief that they were facing themselves. And his heart and his love is towards them. In spite of everything that was about to happen to him.

Now dear friends, we need to take hold of this truth because it is one of great comfort for us this morning. If you are a Christian this morning, if you are one of Christ, if you are one of his disciples, then dear friends, just consider this.

If Christ was so filled with love for his disciples then, in the moments before his death, can he be any less filled with love for you now? Can he be less concerned with you?

Can he be less devoted to you? Can he be less interested in your life and in pouring out his love and revealing his love to you now? How can we doubt his love for us when we realize these things concerning him?

[11 : 07] How foolish we've been when those doubts have come in the space of our lives and we've doubted. And we thought, perhaps Jesus has stopped loving me. Or where is his love?

Or has his love gone cold? Or we feel rejected in some way? Aren't we stupid to think that way when we have such a declaration and such a realization that his love must be a perfect, complete, glorious love?

If he loved them then, he loves us now. And surely that has something to do with what he says here. Or what John's words say concerning the love of Jesus.

He says, Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them, the NIV puts it, the full extent of his love. And there's two ways we could understand that.

I know some of you might have the New King James or the AV and it says, love them to the end. And in one sense, there's two senses to what's going on here and both of them are quite right.

[12 : 09] There's a sense in which, as the NIV puts it, Jesus shows them that his love is unreserved. His love is complete. It's perfect. It's a love of the fullest degree.

The fullest, the largest love possible. But also there's that sense as well that Jesus' love is a love which has no end in time.

So there's a sense in which love has no end in the sense of capacity, if I can put it that way. And there's a sense in which there is no end to that love in regard to eternity. Both those things are true.

And that's the love that Jesus has for his own. For those who were his disciples then, those who are his disciples now. And of course, both of those things find their full expression in the cross.

They find their perfect expression in the cross. And certainly, that's what I believe John and Jesus had in mind when we have these words here. That everything that follows, leading up to, and in particular the cross, is to show that Jesus loved his disciples with the full extent of his love.

[13 : 18] Because in the cross, first of all, of Jesus, we see that Jesus' love is a limitless love. It's an infinite love. It's a perfectly full love. It's a love that holds nothing back.

As Jesus will remind his disciples just later on in John 15, where he says this, greater love has no one than this, than lay down his life for his friends. His love is the greatest love.

There is no greater love than the love of Christ. There is no love. Not the love of Romeo and Juliet. Not the love of any lovers in the past. Not the love of any father for son or mother for daughter.

There is nothing that compares with and comes close to the love of Christ. It is the greatest love, the most perfect love. The love which has no words to describe it love.

What makes that love so amazing, of course? What makes that love so glorious is not just that in the cross Jesus died for us, but it's the sort of people he did die for.

[14 : 24] Because he died for sinners. He died for his enemies. You see, Romans in chapter 5 says this about the love of Christ.

You see, at just the right time, there's time again, when we were still without power, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man.

Though for a good man, someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That's what makes the love of Christ so glorious.

That's what makes it the greatest love in the world because it is love for those who are the unlovely. It is a love for those who are the very enemies of God. You see, we don't deserve God's love.

We can't earn God's love. In fact, we deserve quite the opposite. Paul, again, writing later on to the Ephesians, says this, all of us, including himself, including each one of us, all of us also lived among them, everybody in the world at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature, following its desires and thoughts.

[15 : 33] Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath, anger. But, because of his great love for us, isn't that amazing? We were the enemies of God.

We did everything to please ourselves. We lived to follow our own desires. We lived to keep other people happy, but not God happy. We just went our own way.

And in one sense, we said to God, we don't care about your laws. We don't care about what you want. We want to do it my way. And what happens? God, in love for us, sent his son.

He didn't write us off. He didn't say, well, that's it. I've had enough. That's it. You all deserve my anger. You deserve judgment. You deserve eternal punishment. So that's it. That's what you're going to get. You've chosen not to have my love.

You've chosen not to have my care. Therefore, you will have what you deserve. He could have done that, but he hadn't, and he didn't. He sent his son. Christ didn't come to die for the good.

[16 : 33] He came to die for the bad. He didn't come for the righteous, but the unrighteous. He didn't come for the godly, but the ungodly. He didn't come for the sinless, but for the sinful.

That's what makes his love so amazing. And why did he do it? Why did he come and die in that place? Because he wanted us to be forgiven. Because he knew that was the only way we could be forgiven.

The only way we could have peace with God. The only way we could be brought back to God. We couldn't do it ourselves. Jesus, in love for us, took the punishment our sins deserved.

Not just to rescue us from hell and its judgment, but rather to bring us into relationship and into life with God himself. Here's again another part where Paul speaks in the New Testament.

1 Thessalonians. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are alive or dead, we may live together with him.

[17 : 35] That's the wonderful thing. Jesus didn't simply die just to save us from hell, but to save us for himself, to save us to be his own possession, to save us to be his own children, to save us to bring us into life with him both now and for eternity.

That's why he's able to say later on in John's Gospel, I have come that they might have life and have it to the full. But only fullness of love could do that.

And so again we're brought back to this realization which if only we could grasp it would solve all the problems in our lives. And it's this. If Christ loved us all the way to the cross, then there is nothing in all the universe that can keep him from loving us today.

And if Christ loved us all the way to the cross and was willing to pay that price for our sins, then there's nothing that the world can do, the devil can do, that we can do that will stop God from continuing to love us and to lavish his grace upon us.

Here's what Paul says in Romans 8. He says this. What shall we say then in response to this, talking about what God has done? If God is for us, who can be against us?

[18 : 49] In other words, it's a rhetorical question. Nobody can. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

He goes on to say, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Again, it's a rhetorical question. Nothing. In all these things, we're more than conquerors. Nothing can separate us from the love of God as in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I wish I really believed that. And I wish you really believed it. We all believe it there and we believe some of it there, but we don't really believe it. Because otherwise, when the troubles and the trials and difficulties come, we wouldn't doubt.

We wouldn't struggle. We wouldn't think that God has abandoned us. We wouldn't feel as if his love has called towards us. We would know that he truly does. And yes, we still sin and we still get it wrong and we still muck up, but those things will not diminish his love for us.

Because his love is a love which is limitless, having shown the full extent of his love. Love that is complete for those he bought with his own precious blood.

[20 : 05] And then there's that second sense, isn't there, that we talked about. That second sense in which Jesus, we're told, love them to the end. In other words, that this love of Christ has no time limit or restriction, has no sell-by date.

We wouldn't put it that way. It's never going to wear out. It's never going to come to an end. It's not going to be worn down over the process of years. We went up to the Abbey yesterday because it was free and you can see the stones there, how they've been weathered and worn, haven't they, over the years by the rain and the wind.

You know, the wind, the rain and the wind. They've been weathered and worn away. But Christ's love never is worn away or weathered. It never diminishes or becomes weaker. It's a timeless love and it's clear, isn't it, from what he says here.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. It's clear that the love of Christ was already operating. John is drawing us to the fact that this love of Jesus isn't just shown at the cross.

It just doesn't happen in a moment in time. He's already loved his own. It wasn't starting on that night. It wasn't only seen in the cross. It was a love which was working and was reaching out and touching and affecting their lives all the way through.

[21 : 26] Read through the Gospel of John, you find even other people recognizing Jesus' love. When he wept at the graveside of Lazarus, people who had no faith in Jesus said, look, look how he loved him.

It was apparent. When you met with Jesus Christ, you met with a man of love. He had compassion on the multitudes. He had love and tender care for the leper. He was a man who oozed in the most wonderful and non-tacky way love.

That new commandment that he gave to his disciples, again in John 15, he gives them a new, it makes no sense unless they knew that he loved them and then his love was operating.

A new commandment I give to you, what is it? Love one another as I have loved you. Now, if they'd never known anything of Jesus' love, it'd be very difficult for them to love as he had loved them.

But because they had received and had enjoyed and had experienced his love, then therefore they were able to love with an example set before them. Now, and if this love is truly a love which is endless in time, then it also is endless in beginning.

[22 : 40] Not just endless in eternity, but endless in beginning. It's a love which has always been. He loved his own, means that he loved those who are his even before the world was made.

He loved those even before he went to the cross for them. He loved them. So the mystery of Christ's love for his own is this. He has loved us with an everlasting love throughout all ages of all eternity.

Now, we can't take that in. It's impossible to understand that somehow before you and I were born, somehow even before the world was made, God loved us before we had being.

But that's exactly what the Bible says. We don't fully comprehend it, but we know it's true and we rejoice in the truth of it. For Paul says here, for he chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons. Again, we just can't take it in, can we? Our minds are these tiny little peas, aren't they? Our minds is anyway. And we're trying to think about the vast love of Christ, the love that could love us before the world began and choose to save and rescue us from our sins, the love that could bring him into the world just so that he could go to the cross.

[23 : 56] But this is the love that Christ has for his own. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the full extent. And this is the love for you, dear Christian, and me.

This is the love that we're talking about, a love of which we can be so certain and sure and definite. Whatever our feelings, they go up and down, sadly. Our love for Christ is not as passionate and warm as it should be.

No matter how many our sorrows, no matter how many our sins and our failings, this is the rock, this is the foundation, this is the place upon which we stand. It is the love of Christ which is magnified and proclaimed as loud as could be heard in the whole world through the cross.

But it's the love that has been poured out into our hearts by the Spirit so we know it's true. Let me close then this morning by asking you this.

Are you one of Jesus' own this morning? Notice, He loved His own. He loved His own. Are you one of His own this morning? Are you one of those who are a recipient of His love?

[25 : 05] Are you one of those who has been brought into the embrace of Christ and received all that He has accomplished on the cross, the forgiveness and the peace with God and the life that is everlasting and the fullness?

If you aren't, then surely don't you want to be? Don't you wish you were one of His own? Doesn't this glimpse of Jesus' love make you long that you were loved to such a degree as this?

Doesn't this unreserved love make you want to receive His love? But won't you ask Him? Won't you ask Him, Lord Jesus, please show me the full extent of your love?

I've heard about it but I want to know it. It's one thing to hear about it, different thing to know it, isn't it? We've all heard about Everest. We've all heard about these great mountains, K2.

We've all heard, but none of us have climbed them. None of us have experienced what it's been to learn. It's no good hearing about this love of Christ. We must experience it. We must receive it and to receive it we must ask.

[26 : 11] Won't you gladly turn from those things that prevent you from knowing His love? Your own sins, your own pride, your own selfishness. Won't you get rid of them? They're just destructive.

They're no good for you. Won't you get rid of them and turn to Him and receive of that love that cleanses and forgives? Won't you receive the embrace of the God who loved you and died for you?

Why continue being separated from His love? Why carry on in unbelief, in feeling that actually you're good enough as you are? Why carry on in pride?

Our final hymn has a verse and the final verse goes like this. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love, come and abide, lifting my life till it rises above envy and falsehood and pride, seeking to be lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Can you sing that and mean it? Make it a prayer. If you've never known that love of Christ, if you've never experienced that forgiveness that He brings, then make that a prayer and say, Lord, I'm saying this to you, not to me, but to you, God.

[27 : 23] Come to my heart with your wonderful love. Come and make your home in me. And perhaps even, dear friends, as a Christian, you've lost that love and you feel your heart is cold or you find it hard to believe, then again, make that your prayer.

Lord, come to my heart afresh with that love that I might know that I know that I know that you love me and that you'll never, ever stop loving me.

Well, let's sing this together, shall we? It's number 537. 537. Come, let us sing of a wonderful love, tender and true, out of the heart of the Father of God, streaming to me and to you.