

John Chapter 13 v 18 - 35

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[0 : 00] chapter 13, and we'll read the second part of the chapter. I only want to concentrate on a couple of verses tonight.

After the long reading we had this morning, we'll just have two verses this evening. But we'll read the whole of chapter 13 from verse 18 to the end.

John chapter 13 verse 18, Jesus says, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.

His disciples stared at one another at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to his disciple, to this disciple, and said, ask him which one he means.

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

[1 : 34] As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. What you are about to do, do quickly, Jesus told him. But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast. Or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out.

And it was night. When he was gone, Jesus said, now is the son of man 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.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Simon Peter asked him, Lord, where are you going?

[2 : 38] Jesus replied, where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. Peter asked, Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.

Then Jesus answered, will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times. Amen.

You may find it helpful to keep your Bible open at that passage, John chapter 13, although I'm sure you'll be very familiar with the words that I'm going to preach on tonight.

I want to concentrate on the new commandment in verses 34 and 35. Jesus says to his disciples, a new command I give you.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

[3 : 56] A brief prayer. Heavenly Father, once again, we thank you for your word which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path and which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Open our eyes to see wonderful things in your word this evening. Not just to see them, but to believe them and to obey them.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay, so I want to look at this command of Jesus, this new commandment, love one another.

It's the last night of Jesus on earth. These chapters of John, John 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 have been called the Holy of Holies of the Bible.

And in these chapters, Jesus, first of all, gives an example for his disciples to follow. He washes their feet.

[4 : 57] And he says, I've done this to set you an example. This is how you should treat one another. If I can wash your feet, you ought to be able to wash one another's feet. So he begins with a model, an example.

And then to the end of chapter 13, right through to the end of chapter 16, he teaches them. Tremendous block of teaching. Then in chapter 17, he prays for them.

And when you think about it, that is the work of the pastor, isn't it? To model the Christian life. To teach the Christian life.

To teach the word of God. And to pray for the people he's teacher. So if you've got a pastor who does that, whichever church you've come from, and I know there are people from different churches here tonight, and I don't know anything much about any of them, but if you've got a pastor that does those things, you've got a good pastor.

I want to focus on the teaching section, and particularly this new commandment that Jesus gives to his disciples.

[6 : 13] It's not just a parting wish. It's a parting commandment. This is a commandment. A new commandment I give you.

Love one another. So I want to speak first of all about the meaning of love. What does the New Testament mean? What does the Bible mean when it talks about love? When it tells us to love one another?

This is Jesus' parting commandment, and he says it is the distinguishing mark of a Christian. And if that's the case, then we need to be clear about just exactly what love is.

Particularly in the light of the fact that in the world, the word love is used constantly, and the world doesn't know what it is.

It has no idea what love is. In the world, love is a feeling of attraction for something or someone.

[7 : 21] You feel attracted to it, or him or her. And it can be just about anything. People love all kinds of things. I've seen stickers on the backs of cars.

I love surfing. I love Carlisle United. I love cats, which I can't understand at all.

For some reason, people just feel attracted to something. Cats, surfing, which is probably a bit better, really. Carlisle United. They feel an attraction for these things.

And sometimes a person is the object of that attraction. And when it is, and when the person feels the same attraction for the person who has the attraction, it is a situation of romantic love.

And this is what the world means by love. You fall in love, which is an interesting verb to use, isn't it? You fall into it.

[8 : 32] You fall in love. There's nothing you can do about it. You've fallen for somebody. Some enchanted evening. I went to hear the Dales men sing last night on my way here, in honor of my old school friend, Richard, who was just given the notice here.

He was in the choir, but they had a soloist as well. And one of the solos was, Some enchanted evening you will see a stranger across a crowded room. And somehow you know.

You know even then. That somehow you will see her again and again. Who can explain it? Who can even try? Fools give their reasons. Wise men never try.

So it's just something that happens to you. The chemistry, as we sometimes say, is right. It's just love. The problem with that view of love is what happens when it wears off.

What happens indeed if on another enchanted evening you see another stranger across another crowded room and the same thing happens? Well, one thing you mustn't do nowadays is deny yourself.

[9 : 48] Deny your feelings. You mustn't do that. So, even though you promised your wife or husband that you would love her or him until death parted you, because of these feelings you've got for somebody else, which you mustn't deny, before you know where you are, you've got an affair or a divorce, on your hand.

That's the modern view of love. And it bears no resemblance whatsoever to the New Testament meaning of love. I'm not arguing that feelings are absent from Christian love.

I'm not arguing that for one minute. But I am saying that feelings are not the primary emphasis in the New Testament view of love.

In the New Testament, in the Bible, love is primarily not just a feeling, it is an activity. Love is an activity.

Love is a way you behave, not just a way that you feel. And that's why Jesus commands us to love one another. Now, you can't command a feeling.

[11 : 05] You can't command a person to feel something. You can't command a person to love Carlisle United. You can't command your little boy or your little daughter to love his or her greens.

You can command him or her to eat them, but you can't command him or her to love them. So that's why we know that love in the New Testament is not primarily a feeling.

It's commanded. It's something you decide to do, whether you feel like it or not. It's a way you behave. It's a lifestyle. And that's why in the marriage service, the couple who are getting married promise to love each other for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, until they are parted by death.

You can't promise to have a feeling like that for the rest of your life, but you can promise to behave like that for the rest of your life.

And that's, instead, can I remind you that that is what happens when people are married. I think we've almost forgotten that in our society these days. That is what we're actually doing when we're married.

[12 : 25] We are promising before God and before the congregation to love each other for the rest of our lives until we're parted by death.

That's what marriage is. That's Christian marriage. So, biblical love bears no resemblance to the worldly view of love.

It is even something that can be taught. You can teach people to love. In fact, Paul in Titus tells the younger, tells the older women in the church to love, to teach the younger women to love their husband.

The older women are to teach the younger women to love their husband. It's something you learn how to do. It's not something that comes over you, a feeling that comes over you.

It is something you learn how to do better and better, more and more. That's Christian love. Okay, so love is not primarily a feeling, it is an activity.

[13 : 38] What kind of activity is it? Well, it is activity aimed at the good or the well-being or the benefit or the blessing of others.

Love is meeting the needs of other people. It is caring for others. It is being other person-centered instead of self-centered.

It is valuing and respecting other people because they are created in the image and the likeness of God regardless of how that image is being defaced and ruined.

Because God has made human beings in his own image and likeness, they are to be respected, they are to be loved, they are to be cared for whether they deserve it or not.

So love is not getting something for myself from another person, it is giving myself to another person. It is spending my energy, my strength, my time, my money, my life for others.

[14 : 44] It is self-denying, it is self-giving. And we love people like this not because we like to feel important, not because we like to feel good about ourselves, not because we like to control people, not because we like to be bossy, but we do it out of genuine concern and care for that person.

There is not a lot of love like this around. Completely unselfishable, self-centered love for another person regardless.

There isn't self-love. Loving another person genuinely, completely, not because we love ourselves, but because we love them. That is what we mean by love.

So that is the meaning of love. I want to look secondly at the model, the model of love. Jesus says here, a new commandment I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another.

So the model for love, Christian love, the kind of love I've been talking about tonight so far, the model for that love is Jesus. And he says we've got to love one another if we're his disciples as he has loved us.

[16 : 11] have you ever asked yourself why Jesus calls this commandment a new commandment? I mean the commandment to love our neighbour is as old as Leviticus.

It's in the book of Leviticus, the commandment to love our neighbour. And Jesus summarised the Old Testament law as loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

It was standard Jewish teaching from the Old Testament. So why does Jesus call this a new commandment? He calls it a new commandment because he tells us to love one another as he has loved us.

That's the new dimension to this commandment. We're to love one another as Jesus has loved us. How has Jesus loved us?

Well if we'd read the first half of this chapter we'd have found Jesus washing his disciples feet and John says that having loved his own who were in the world he loved them to the end or he showed them the full extent of his love.

[17 : 26] In other words the washing of the disciples feet was an example of love. It was doing something demeaning unspectacular in humble service even for those who were going to let him down very soon within the next few hours.

He washed Judas' feet and Judas would use those feet as we saw in the earlier part of the reading to go out into the night to betray his master and he would lead the soldiers to the garden of Gethsemane to arrest him.

Jesus washed his feet. He washed Peter's feet who was going to deny him as he said Jesus predicted at the end of the chapter three times before the cock crowed that night.

Peter would have denied him three times with curses and oath claiming that he never knew him. What a letdown from a friend.

And Jesus washed his feet. And he washed the feet of all of them and they were going to forsake him and flee for their lives within a few hours.

[18 : 49] So Jesus washed their feet as an example of what he meant by love. And as is clear from the conversation that he had with Peter on that occasion this was meant to be a foreshadowing a dramatic acted parable of a much greater act of humiliation and love which was going to happen next day.

That's why Jesus says to Peter Peter if you don't let me wash you we can't be friends. We've got nothing to do with each other. If you don't let me wash you, your feet, then if you're too proud to let me wash your feet you'll probably be too proud to accept the fact that I'm going to die for your sins.

I'm not going to just lay aside my garments, I'm going to lay aside my life. I'm not just going to pour out water into a bowl, I'm going to pour out my life's blood for you.

So the washing of the disciples' feet, an act of love, was simply a dramatic acted parable of a much greater act of love, the death of Jesus for our sins.

And that's why Jesus in chapter 15 can go on to say greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

[20 : 18] And you are my friends if you do what I command you. And John in his first letter says this is how we know what love is. This is how we know what love is.

Without this we don't know what love is. This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

That's love. Therefore we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. We are to love one another as Christ loved us. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God dwell in that person?

So Jesus is the model for love. And as we sometimes teach to our children, Jesus' love love is very wonderful.

It's very wonderful. It is amazing love as we often sing. How can it be? It is sacrificing love. It's serving love.

[21 : 25] It's compassionate love. It's giving love. It's forgiving love. It's generous love. It's gracious love. It is undeserved love. And that is how we are to love one another if we're his disciples.

That is how Jesus commands us to love one another if we're his disciples. So we've looked at the meaning of love and we've looked at the model for love and I want to look now at the motivation for love.

The motivation for love because you need a motivation to live like this. I mean why should you live like this? We've only got one life. We've only got one life.

Why should we live the one life we've got for other people instead of for ourselves? Why do it? I need a motivation to live like that.

I don't just need a model. I need a motivation. And that's why I think Jesus' words here don't just mean that his love is the model for our love. His love is the motivation for our love.

[22 : 33] Why should we live lives of love like this? because this is how we have been loved. And when we love like this it is our response.

It must be our response to the love of Jesus for us. So the love of God, the love of Jesus for us is the stimulus that drives us to love others as we have been loved.

As John puts it in his letter, we love because he first loved us. That says it all, doesn't it? We love because he first loved us.

So it's not a question, it's never a question of I must try to love like Jesus because if I do, if I try hard enough, maybe he'll love me.

If I love him, maybe he'll love me. That is absolutely wrong. We don't live lives of love to gain assurance of salvation or to gain confidence that God loves us.

[23 : 36] We know God loves us, we know Christ loves us, and that's why we love others. I mentioned this morning that I go along once a month to a U3A, University of the Third Age philosophy group.

And you might be interested to know, you might be interested in something that came up maybe three months ago. One of the atheists there said this. He said, we atheists are much better people than you Christians.

Why? Because he says, we live good lives, not in order to escape hell, not in order to gain heaven, but just because we want to live good life.

Whereas you Christians, live good lives in order to get to heaven, which we don't believe in, or in order to escape hell, which we don't believe in.

What would you have said if somebody says that to you? Well, I know what I would have said if I got the opportunity. I didn't get the opportunity, unfortunately. But I would have said something like this.

[24 : 50] I would have said, look, you just don't understand the gospel. You don't understand Christianity at all. You don't understand it. You've missed the whole point. Christians do not love in order to impress God so that in the end he might say to them, well, okay, you've done your best.

Maybe there's a place for you in heaven. That's not what we do at all. Christians live their whole lives in response to the love of Jesus for them.

Not in order to try and get him to love them, but because they know he loves them and because that stimulates them and drives them. They're so amazed by that love, they're driven to love others in the same way.

So we will love Jesus. We will love like Jesus, sorry, only when we understand how much Jesus has loved us. Only when the Holy Spirit shows us the length and the breadth and the depth and the height so that we know the love of Christ that is beyond understanding.

That's Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. That's what I pray for you, he says, that the Holy Spirit, that Christ will dwell in your heart through faith so that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height and know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.

[26 : 24] You should pray something like that every day. That's what you should be praying for. Forget a lot of the other things you pray for. Just pray for this every day and when you know the love of Christ then it will fill you with love for others.

This is New Testament Christianity. This is how we live the Christian life. The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts and that means that we know we're loved so we don't have to worry about that anymore.

We don't have to prove ourselves to God or anybody else anymore. We're loved and because we're loved we can forget about ourselves and get on with thinking about other people. This is as I say the Christian life.

The New Testament is full of it. Why do we forgive? Because God has forgiven us. Forgiving one another says Paul just as God in Christ forgave you.

That's why we forgive because we're forgiven. serving one another just as Christ served us. What about our giving?

[27 : 43] Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. That's why you should give generously. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor so that we through his poverty might become rich. That's how you ought to give. That's why you should impoverish yourself in order to enrich others.

Because that's what Jesus did. That's what it means to be a Christian. Okay. So we've looked at the meaning of love.

We've looked at the model of love. We've looked at the motivation for love. And finally I want to look at the mark of love.

Jesus says that this will be the distinguishing mark of his disciples. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. You won't find love like this anywhere, Jesus is saying, apart from the church.

[28 : 51] It's the only place you'll find love like that. now we're so familiar with Jesus' words here that we miss the power of them.

How can you tell who a Christian is, Jesus is saying here? How can you tell who's a Christian? How will the world recognize Jesus as disciples? By their love for one another.

That's what he said. It's the hallmark of a Christian. Now that I'm retired, I occasionally, I hate to admit this, but occasionally I watch five minutes of daytime television and it's usually somebody selling an antique and trying to get a little bit more for it than they bought it for.

Oh, it's so exciting. You know, somebody makes 15 pounds or something and they jump up and down with glee. Honestly. But silver, you know, you've got to look, you've got to see if it's the genuine article or not and they look at the hallmark.

They screw something in their eye and they look at the hallmark. And when they've seen the hallmark, they say, yeah, that's it, that's the genuine stuff, get that. And Jesus says the hallmark of the Christian is this kind of love that I've been talking about tonight.

[30 : 16] if it's there, it's a genuine Christian. If it's not there, not a genuine, I'm afraid it's not a genuine Christian.

That's what Jesus said. it is the trademark. God's trademark on his people.

If you want some decent cornflakes, you get ones with a big letter, a big red letter K on. And that means you're not getting the store's own brand.

Probably tastes exactly the same, but you're not, you're not getting the store's own brand, you're getting the real thing. You're getting genuine, real, Kellogg's cornflakes.

That's what you should go for. That's why they got that big red letter K, so that people will know what they're getting. And the trademark, God's trademark on his people is this kind of love that I've been talking about tonight.

[31 : 24] in the ancient world, it was common for philosophers, Greek philosophers like Plato and so on, and Jewish rabbis and others, to have a group of disciples.

Disciples were young men who attached themselves to a master, attached themselves to a teacher that they admired. Not just to listen to his theoretical teaching, not just to take down notes of his lectures, but to watch his way of life and to copy his way of life.

And then they would pass that way of life, that teaching, onto their disciples in turn. Plato apparently had a group of disciples, and I've read somewhere that Plato used to walk with a stoop.

He had so much knowledge in his head. He couldn't hold it up. And he sort of walked with a philosopher's stoop. And apparently all his disciples walked in exactly the same way.

So you knew exactly who Plato's disciples were. As soon as you saw someone walking around like this, you would say, ah, Plato! And how will people know who my disciples are, says Jesus?

[32 : 46] by the kind of love I've been talking about tonight. As soon as you see a group of people like that, you know whose disciples they are.

By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have loved one for another. So Christians don't need to wear badges, they don't need to wear stickers, they just need to love one another.

And people will know who we are. That's what Jesus says here. That's what Jesus says. And if Jesus says it, it's true. I hope you're hearing me.

Christians should stand out from the rest of the world, they should stand out from the rest of the community for their lavish, generous, outrageous love. They should be by far the most loving people in the community.

I hope that's true of this church. I can't comment on whether it is or not, because I don't know this church that well at all, apart from Richard Atherton, who I was at school with.

[33 : 54] And apart from that, I don't really know much about the church, but I hope it's true of the church, that people will be able to tell that that is a Christian community.

Those people follow Jesus. You can tell that by the way, they love one another, in this incredible, unbelievable, amazing way.

In chapter 15, Jesus is going to tell them they'll be hated by the world, the world will hate you. He said, so for pity's sake, don't spend your lives hating each other.

There's enough hatred without that. There's enough hatred for the church without the church hating each other. And that hatred, I can tell you, is going to get worse.

It's getting worse. Not just indifference, but hatred, contempt for God's people, for the church, for Christians. Therefore, in view of that, please love one another.

[35 : 01] Don't add to the hatred by hating one another. by fighting one another, by arguing and competing with each other all the time in the church.

I know Christian communities, or communities that claim to be Christian, claim to be churches. Some of them sound theologically. And there are people in those churches that have been at each other's throats for years.

I know professing Christians who spent the last 30 or 40 years of their lives at loggerheads with their church leaders. What a waste of a life. What a waste of a Christian life. How terrible to find out on the last day that you were nothing but a resounding gong and a clanging cymbal.

So I, you know, I exhort you this evening, in the name of Jesus, please, love one another as Christ has loved you.

If there's anyone here that you can't do that with, get it sorted out as quickly as possible. people. Why does Jesus want people to love each other like this?

[36 : 20] Why does he want his disciples to love each other like this? Well, if you read chapter 17 where he prays for them, he prays for their unity and he says that he wants them to be one as he and his father are one so that the world might believe that the father sent him.

In other words, the faith of the world, to a large extent, humanly speaking, is reliant upon the unity and the love that Christians show to each other.

Without that, all our evangelism will just turn people off. We preach the grace of God.

We preach the love of God in the gospel for sinners. And the community that preaches the grace of God must be a gracious community. It must be a community that is gracious to sinners.

Paul says love covers a multitude of sin. Covers a multitude of sin. That's what Jesus did for us. That's what God did for us.

[37 : 32] He covered our sins. That's what atonement made by the work of Jesus. Love covers a multitude of sins. That's what we should be doing. Not noticing other people's sins and making a lot of other people's sins and hoping that they don't make a lot of ours.

Hiding our own and making a lot of other people. We preach the grace of God.

The grace of God should be preached by a gracious community, by a loving community. It's a terrible thing when an ugly community preaches a beautiful and lovely gospel.

It's a wonderful and lovely thing when that lovely gospel is proclaimed by a lovely community. That's why Paul, writing to Titus, says, tell them to adorn the gospel.

Tell them to make the gospel even more beautiful, if you can believe that. Tell them to make the gospel even more beautiful than it is by the way that they behave.

[38 : 43] So as well as giving out the gospel, we live out the gospel. The Christian community lives out and gives out the gospel. And it lives lives worthy of the gospel.

people. And when the world sees that, by the grace of God, the Son will turn to God and to the Lord Jesus that we preach.

But if he doesn't see that, they won't. So let's pray. Father, we'll always find excuses for not loving other churches, other Christians, other believers.

It'll always be their fault that we don't love them, not ours. So we pray that you will help us to be real and help us to listen to Jesus, his final command.

On the night on which he showed his own who were in the world, how great his love was for them. On the night he washed their feet, even those who would disappoint him, very, very shortly.

[39 : 59] Lord, show us the love of Christ by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that we're rooted and grounded in love, and so that we know the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of your love, and so that we know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.