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JOHN 13

John Series

Open your Bibles with me to John 13. Here's the setting of the story that we're in today. We come to the last week of Jesus' life. In fact, we're at the night before the crucifixion. Jesus is going to be in an upper room and He's going to talk to His disciples. Five chapters are given over to this experience. We call this the Upper Room Discourse.

There are three big sermons of Jesus, so to speak, or talks that He gives in the Bible that we have. The first one is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. We have the Olivet Discourse that comes at the end of Matthew. And we have this one called the Upper Room Discourse. So there are five chapters, John 13-17. It's a very important time as they're coming together and Jesus has some very important things He wants to say to His disciples.

We're going to learn some very important things about the Holy Spirit in this section. Jesus is going to talk about the world and how we're to relate to the world. He's going to talk about love, which we're going to see today. Over the next few weeks we'll cover these chapters.

It's a very significant time because it's the day before. Now when we say the day before, it's maybe Thursday night. We traditionally view the Last Supper taking place Thursday night and Friday being Good Friday when the crucifixion took place and then Sunday, of course, the resurrection. There are some who pushed that back to Sunday night for the Last Supper and then Thursday for the crucifixion so that you can have three full days in the grave before Jesus rises from the dead. I don't know. We don't know for sure what that is. Tradition says it's on Friday. The important thing is crucifixion is coming and this is the night before.

It's like a coach talking to his team before the kickoff. It's like a general talking to his lieutenants before the battle. Jesus knows what's going to happen here and He wants His disciples to know what's going on.

He's going to emphasize love in this first section. We're going to talk about that. Look at John 13:1.

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Jesus is at the end of His life. He knows that. He knows that He only has a limited amount of time that He's going to be sharing with these disciples. If you've had a significant illness or you

know someone who's passed away, it just does something to you, sobers you, gives you perspective, helps you think about the realities of life. We have Jesus right at the end here and He has some important things He wants to say to His disciples. They are so important we need to have our ears perked up and listening in particular to what He has to say to them.

He's going to talk about love here as a very important concept and He's going to develop what that looks like in practical terms.

But He loves these disciples. He loves them. And just like anybody who's about to die is going to draw those people that they love close together and just talk to them and say, "Hey, I love you." That's what Jesus is doing and He wants to communicate some very important things to them that will help them as they go forward. We're going to see what He says to them.

In order to help us understand this passage, in order to grasp what's going on here, I want to go to another passage of scripture. I want to look at the same story in Luke 22 and I want you to be able to see the preparations that are made for this evening and the things that are going on just to give it some perspective.

In Luke 22 it says this: *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."*

"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

It's interesting to me as you think about the sobering time, as we read in verse 1, and then we look at this whole story as it's unfolding. Jesus really wants to share His heart with His disciples. He wants to share how much He loves them. He wants to talk to them, but the challenge that they're experiencing here is they've got this issue. They're talking about who's the greatest. Jesus has a problem here. He's got to address that issue and as He addresses the issue it leaves us with some practical applications for our own lives.

So we go back to John 13 in verse 2 and we're going to see Jesus at the table and we're going to see what's actually going to happen.

There were paintings that illustrate what this might have looked like. This is like a common one that's often shown. I don't think it really looked like this. These guys look like they're posing for a picture and nobody's on the other side of the table.

Probably this is a better view of what it might have looked like when they're reclining at the table. Notice how they're reclining. They're on one hand or one elbow and eating with the other. They're all around a small table and it's low to the ground and they're all paying attention to what Jesus has to say. I like this picture. It gives us a good understanding it seems to me of what it might have been like at that time.

Go back to John 13:2. It says, *The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.*

Now that's going to be important. He knew who He was in order to do what's next.

So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The first thing that we see about Jesus here is that He knew who He was. I think if we're going to follow the model and be servants to others we have to know who we are. Because if we don't know who we are then we start to compete and compare ourselves. "Well you didn't do this for me and I can't believe I always have to do everything for you." And so we start competing and comparing and starting to get petty in our thinking. If we're truly going to be servants and model what Jesus is teaching here we're going to have to know who we are.

Notice in the passage it says, *Jesus knew that the Father had put all these things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.* There was this sense that Jesus understood who He was. When we understand who we are, that we are really servants of God first, that we are people who are coming before God first, when we know that, then we can

come and be servants to our mates, servants to our children or young people, servants to our parents, servants at work. Because we know who we are. So we have to start there and know who we are.

The problem that Jesus is going to address here is a stinky problem or a dirty problem. Like we often have to deal with dirty problems in life He's going to choose to deal with their feet. Now they didn't wear Reeboks or Nikes, they wore those – what are those fancy sandals? – Rickenbacker or whatever they are. They only had those kind. They didn't have the Reeboks or Nikes. But everybody wore these shoes and their feet were dirty.

It's interesting to me Jesus doesn't get up and give them a lecture on dirty feet and how important it is to keep your feet clean. He just quietly gets up and takes care of the dirty mess. Just a reminder about us. When we see something that's dirty and we have to do something about it, we need to view ourselves as servants. We are servants. We can step out of our comfort zone. We can do things that we might not normally do because we're servants. And Jesus does. He gets up and takes care of the dirty problem because He wants to communicate a message to them.

He knows that all things are under His power (as He says in the passage), but He doesn't print letterhead that says how powerful He is. What He does is He engages in a common activity. It's very common but uncommon that a leader or an authority or a teacher or a rabbi would be the one to stoop down and take on this task.

Jesus wants to communicate a very important message to us and to His disciples who are competing with one another about who is the greatest. He wants to communicate to them how important it is to be a servant.

I think it takes more spirituality for us to take the trash out than it does to lead a Bible study. More spirituality for us to wash the dishes than to stand up and preach a sermon. The spirituality that comes when we're a servant is something that's very uncommon, shall I say, but very important for us in our lives.

What does it mean to wash someone's feet today? Well maybe it means wash the dishes or wash the floor or wash the clothes. Or maybe it means to engage someone in a way that they want to be engaged, to care for someone in the way that they need to be cared for. That's what it means to be a servant.

My grandson, Hudson, is ten years old and I was with him a couple weeks ago. He and his brother Hayden are learning how to ask open-ended questions in conversation. Just at ten and eight years old. His dad is teaching them how to engage in conversations with people with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are those that don't answer with one word.

So Hayden asked me the question, just out of the blue, "What do you like doing when you're not working?" Open-ended question. Now for a child to ask a question that's not just about himself but to think about someone else is remarkable it seems to me. That a child's taking interest in someone else's activity. The idea is that they will ask one question and have a follow-up

question and if they can get the person to keep talking then they're doing well. So they're teaching their children how to think about others in conversation.

We don't tend to do that. We tend to think about what we want to talk about and I think it's valuable as we're talking to others it may be a way of washing someone else's feet, to let them talk and to listen to them when you'd rather not listen to what they're talking about.

Jesus cares for His disciples. He cares for a dirty problem by being a servant and illustrating the servanthood. He's going to describe that to them and illustrate it to them as we go through.

Let's go to verse 6 because the story continues. As Jesus works Himself around the room He gets to Peter. When He gets to Peter in verse 6 it says, *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

I think Peter is thinking. He knows Jesus. He knows Jesus does different illustrations and I think Peter is saying, "This must be a test. I know, I'll prove to Jesus that I'm a bigger servant than He is. He doesn't have to wash my feet." And so he makes his statement.

In verse 7 *Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Peter is so extreme in what he does.

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

So verse 9: *"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

He goes from one extreme to another. You have to give Peter credit because Peter, like many of our children, I think, has an extra scoop of passion, excitement, energy. Sometimes I look at the parents who work with those children and I feel sorry for them because I know they must be tired of all the work that it takes to work with someone like that and it takes extra time.

Sometimes a parent will ask me, "Look, I've got this one child that's really challenging and I feel like I'm not being fair to the rest of my children because I have to give more time to this child." I like to point out this passage because in this passage Jesus spends more time with Peter than He does with the other disciples, at least according to the passage.

He gets to Peter and Peter has a different kind of a problem. He just goes and washes everybody's feet. Eleven guys, washes their feet, gets to Peter, number twelve, and Peter's going to need twice as much time. He's got to have a dialogue; we've got to have a discussion about this.

I think that's true with some kids. Some kids need more attention than others. So we're not trying to be fair by giving everybody equal time. I don't think that's even being fair. I think what we're doing is we're giving people what they need. That's what's happening. So Jesus does this.

He cares for Peter by giving him extra explanation, extra time, caring for him in a specific way that Peter needs in order for him to move forward.

Verse 10 – Jesus answers Peter and says, *“Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

What Jesus is doing here is giving us an example of servant leadership. Just because you arrive at a place where you have a certain title – a title of “boss,” “employer,” “president,” “executive director,” “manager,” “father,” “mother” – just because you have a title doesn’t mean you’re exempt from servanthood. And Jesus really demonstrates here this concept of servant leadership in a powerful way.

Verse 15 He continues – *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

It gives us a great application. I think it’s hard for us to serve. You have to know that you’re in this servant mentality when you’re being asked to do something that you’d rather not do or you’re asked to do something that’s a dirty job that gets your hands dirty or takes extra time. When you’re there then you’re a servant and you’re serving not just the person that you’re working with, but you’re serving the Lord. That’s who we’re servants for.

Sometimes in order to be a servant I think we have to prepare ourselves for that. I don’t know if you have to do that. But it’s easier for me to prepare myself to be a servant if I get up in the morning and I say, “Okay. Today I want to be godly. Today I want to be a servant. Today I want to allow the Lord to work in my life.”

If you don’t have a stream of godliness coming in through your prayer, worship time, through the Bible, then your life will normally, naturally take a progress towards selfishness. Your life will normally progress towards the habits that you’ve had in the past. Your life will normally progress toward foul language or to anger episodes or selfishness. It normally goes that direction, so we need a continual influx of godliness coming into our lives.

That’s why Sunday morning is so valuable for us because we come and the Lord gives us a little more that we can take into our week this week. That’s why we have our study in the morning. Spend some time in the Bible and you just read a few verses because you’ve got that coming in. Otherwise your life is just going to naturally progress towards selfishness. We need that time to prompt us to think about other people today. Slow down a bit in order to be a servant.

I'm not sure what you do to increase your servant quotient in your life, but I know that when it gets too low in any of our lives then we start seeing the irritability, we start seeing the episodes of anger, we see ourselves engaging in habits that we know we shouldn't be involved in. That's what happens and so we really need to come to this and understand it in a practical way.

They were asking who is the greatest. Jesus is teaching them. Let me show you something about love. Let me show you what love actually means in practical ways. He's trying to address their concern.

Now Jesus has something else He wants to share in this passage. And so as He's continuing to dialogue with them He's going to talk to them about how Judas is the one to betray Him. I think He's doing this because He wants His disciples to recognize that the betrayal of Judas is not a surprise, that God isn't surprised by this betrayal. There's nothing that happens in life that surprises God and they need to know that in their lives. I think that He's going to teach them now and tell them that Judas is going to betray Him because He wants them to know that God is in charge, He's in control of this, that it isn't something random that's taking place.

Verse 18 – He says as He continues, *“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’*

“I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

They're in this environment where they're all around the table and Jesus is saying to them, *“One of you is going to betray me.”* But did you see the words right before that? It says He was *troubled in spirit*. I don't know if you've been tracking this. This is chapter 13, but we also have the same statement (He was *troubled in spirit*) in chapter 12. We also have the same statement in chapter 11. He was *troubled in spirit*. These are emotional times for Jesus. When Jesus is experiencing this emotion inside and He makes this statement, *“One of you is going to betray me.”*

Verse 22: *His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.* They were shocked. They're looking. “You've got to be kidding me. It's one of us? I mean, the Twelve. There's only twelve of us here and one of us is going to betray Him? Who could it be?”

One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

John is the person. It's interesting that John doesn't include his name as a form of humility in his writing here in the gospel of John. He refers to himself as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. What that tells me is that here's John writing at the end of his life, maybe he's eighty years old or something – I don't know how old he is, but he's writing many years later. As he's thinking back

on those early experiences when he came to Christ and when he spent those three years with Jesus, the thing that's remarkable for him is that Jesus loved me. That Jesus loved me very much. And so he calls himself *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. I just think that's a remarkable thing.

Verse 24: *Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."*

Peter must not have been sitting next to Jesus. And for some reason Peter doesn't feel comfortable talking over the table and saying, "Hey, who is it?" The conversations are continuing around the table maybe. He motions. "Hey! Hey, John!" I can't imagine Peter. He's such an interesting guy. But he must have somehow communicated. It says he motioned to John and when he motioned to John he said, "Find out who it is."

Verse 25: *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, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." 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 festival, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

I was pondering this week. What caused Judas to fail? or to fall? I mean here's a guy who had seen the demons cast out of people. Here's a man who had been with Jesus when He fed five thousand people. Here's a man who had watched people be healed of blindness. And now he's decided to betray Jesus. What is it that caused him to do that? Made him susceptible to greed and then be able to take the money from the religious leaders. What is it that set him up for that?

I wonder if it might have been unrealistic expectations of who Jesus is. I wonder if he expected Jesus to somehow conquer and take over and be a king, an earthly king, as many of the other people did, and because He didn't do that maybe he was disillusioned with Jesus. "This isn't what I wanted. This isn't what I bought into."

I think that sometimes we can find ourselves in that situation. We have these expectations of God that says, "God, I'm committed to you and therefore you should bless me." Then when some good thing doesn't happen in our lives you say, "Well I call myself a Christian, but God doesn't give me anything or He doesn't give me what I want." We become disillusioned because we have this idea about who God is. We have an idea about what it means to be a Christian that's false. And we have unrealized expectations of God. We can sometimes set ourselves up for a problem.

We need to be ready. We need to be thinking about not what can God do for me, we need to be thinking how can I fit into what God is doing in this world? "I don't understand some of the things that are going on around here, Lord. What do you want me to do? How do you want me to respond to this?"

Verse 31: *When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified (the word glorified is used five times here) 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.*

The glorification is the cross that is coming. That’s what He’s talking about. And things now, these circumstances, the conversations, it’s all tumbling toward the cross now. The glorification of God.

Verse 33: *“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.*

They had been together three years. Hanging around a lot together. Wherever they go they’re together for the most part. Now Jesus is saying, “I’m going somewhere now and you can’t come with me.” This is going to confuse some, but in particular Peter’s going to get stuck here. Jesus is going to do some teaching. We’re going to look at the teaching now in the next few verses, but Peter doesn’t get this next teaching because Peter is thinking about the statement. “Where you’re going I can’t come?” He’s going to come back to that.

Let’s look at the teaching. We’ll come back to Peter’s question in a moment. Verse 34. Here’s some teaching that Jesus wants them to understand, something very important for us to catch here. He says, *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*

What’s new about that? He’s talked about loving people before. It’s not new that we’re to love each other. It’s love people *as I have loved you*. It’s this idea of this commitment like He got up from the table, He’s demonstrating a love that’s different, this sacrificial love of going to the cross. All of that is the love that He wants His disciples to have and to share with each other.

Verse 35, a key verse in the Bible, I would say – *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

As we’re sharing the gospel with people, as we’re sharing things, there’s information we want to pass on to them. We want them to understand the facts of the gospel. But often that’s passed through relationship. It’s the love that we share with someone.

Rarely do we argue someone into the kingdom where you come and you defend the faith and help them understand something. Sometimes people get sidetracked from the gospel itself by thinking about things like the pro-life movement (which is a valuable thing, a very important thing). But the most important thing is salvation. Or they talk about creation, whether it happened in seven days or seven ages or whatever. Which is an interesting question to dialogue, but it’s not the most important thing. When we get sidetracked about these other things, we miss the gospel message. That is the most important thing – that people would see that.

How does it come? It doesn’t come by arguing with people. It comes by loving them and sharing God’s love with them.

Verse 36: *Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"*

Now that does not follow from the previous two verses. Peter's going from back three verses before to this statement where Jesus says *where I'm going you cannot come*. Peter had brain lock. He got stuck there, so he probably doesn't hear this part about loving one another.

I really like the way Jesus cares for him. I think it's just in a very practical way it illustrated how we should care for our mates, how we should care for others who want to talk. Because Peter goes back three verses. Jesus isn't there, Jesus is going on, but Peter says, "Wait. Wait a minute. Let's talk about this thing about we can't go where you say you're going. Where are you going anyway?" Notice what Jesus does. He goes with it. He listens to him. He cares for Peter.

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? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!" Wow. That's a hard statement for Peter. And we'll see how that develops itself over time.

But the point is, Jesus cares for him. He goes with the conversation. I just find that really interesting. Because I think my temptation is to say, "Okay we'll talk about that in a minute. First let's finish this conversation that we're having right now." No. He doesn't do that. Jesus says, "Okay you want to go there? I'll take you there. Let's talk about that and where you are." And He addresses Peter. Because Jesus continually has to give Peter more time than He gives the other disciples because that's what he needs.

I think there are things in our life, situations where people needs more time, a little bit more care, they need a little bit more patience, they need a little bit more listening. And that's the servant to us. Washing their feet. And Jesus not only demonstrates it by getting up from the table and putting a towel around His waist, He demonstrates it in the way He cares about Peter and kind of goes with the conversation that Peter needs and in helping him in the midst of that.

This passage is just helpful. It's helpful for me as a pastor. It's helpful for me as a pastor because I look at this servant leadership concept and it just reminds me again that my job is to be a servant leader as I pastor. I want our church to be characterized by a church that loves people and cares for them, that's reaching out so people when they come here they feel the sense of love.

I think that I have two jobs as a pastor. One is to love people. I want people to feel when they come to Calvary Chapel that they are the most loved people in the state. That this church is a loving place where they can feel connected and cared for in the midst of all of that. The second thing is to teach the word. That's part of my job as well. So whether we have seventy people at church on Sunday, which probably we have today, or seven hundred people, I put the same amount of time into the teaching of God's word because that's what God has called me to do.

I look at this passage and I see Jesus demonstrating servanthood. That's what it's about. It's not about being a boss. It's not about being the center of attention. It's about serving.

I invite you to do that with me. That we can be the church that God wants us to be. If you've been here for more than a couple weeks, you're no longer a visitor. Consider yourself one of the people here. Greet people when we're at our greeting time. Help them feel welcome. If someone's not here on a Sunday, say, "Wow, so-and-so isn't here." Maybe you'd consider contacting them during the week. I sometimes do that. When I know someone's not here I try to find out why. Maybe they need a little encouragement. Maybe they need a little bit of grace or someone to listen to them. That's what it means to be a servant. So I invite you to be a part of that as we continue to be Calvary Chapel and continue to be what God wants.

One more passage as we close. It's a passage where Paul is reflecting on this whole subject, reflecting, I think, on this chapter, this story, reflecting on Jesus' life.

He tells us this story in Philippians 2. He reflects on it by saying this. And these are good words for us too that summarize what Jesus was teaching. Philippians 2 says this: *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

My father used to hold the Bible in his hands when he was going to do devotions with us as a family and he would say, "Are you ready? I'm going to open the Bible now. We don't know whether God's going to tell us something big to do or something small, but God speaks to us through His word." Today He's telling us to do something small but meaningful as we serve each other.

Let's pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word and I ask that you would allow us to have the freedom in our hearts to know who we are before you and we know who we are to be able to serve others. Show us what the small things are that you would have us do as we care for others today. In Jesus' name, amen.